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March 5, 2007 A Reformed Biweekly No. 2810 $2.00

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The North Korean agreement: nuclear blackmail or road to normalization?

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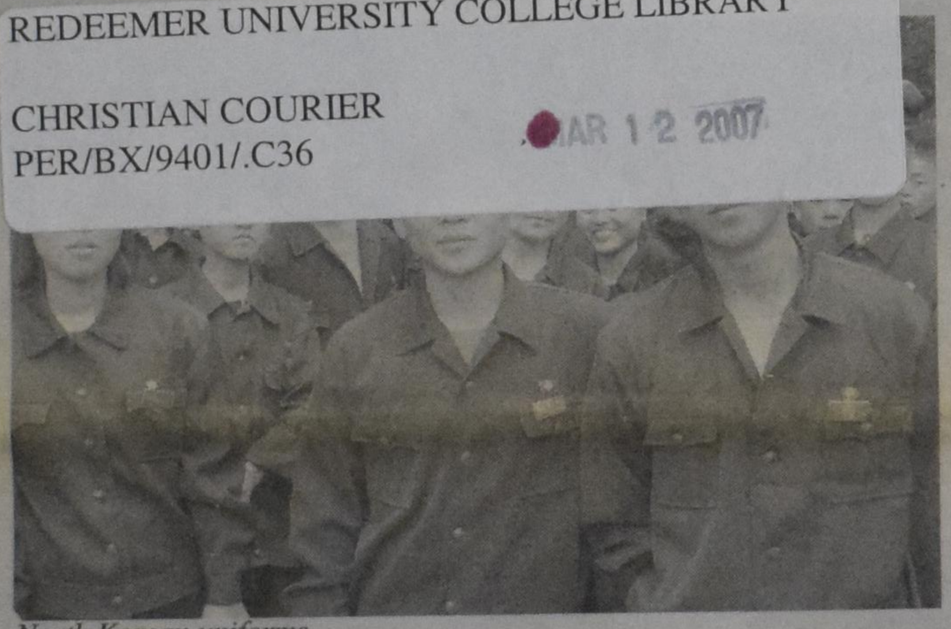
Harry der Nederlanden

The six-party talks with North Korea have finally produced results. Not everyone is happy with those results, however. Critics on the left complain that it represents a complete reversal of previous Bush policy and could have been – should have been – accomplished long ago. If it had, it may have prevented the recent testing by North Korea of a nuclear bomb. Those on the right complain that it's a worthless agreement because the North Koreans have never signed such agreements in good faith.



North Korean uniforms

The deal that has been struck calls for North Korea to shut down the nuclear plant at Yongbyon within 60 days and eventually to abandon it. This is the plant which has been providing the nuclear waste that lends itself to extracting the makings of nuclear bombs. North Korea also agrees to admit back into the country the inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Association which it had booted out of the country in 2002. There are also commitments to future steps toward further denuclearization.

In exchange for taking these steps, North Korea will receive 50,000 tons of fuel oil in 60 days, with another 950,000 tons to follow in increments, depending on whether North Korea follows through on its end of the bargain. The U.S. pledges to release millions in North Korean funds that were frozen under sanctions imposed when the regime was alleged to be committing international bank fraud. It also promises to take steps to remove North Korea from the list of countries that sponsor terrorism and to lift trade sanctions. Further aid and normalization of relations is promised contingent on further denuclearization by North Korea.

Criticism from the right

Critics of the deal, especially those on the right, point out that the agreement does not address the status of North Korea's existing nuclear weapons. By most estimates, it should have the makings of several nuclear bombs by now. According to some intelligence reports, North Korea also has the beginnings of nuclear facilities for the production of plutonium. North Korea admitted as much at one time, although it quickly turned around and denied it. No mention is made of such facilities in this deal.

Clearly North Korea has refused to put existing nuclear gains on the table. There are vague references to future negotiations, but little of substance.

Some of the most severe criticism came from the right. These critics point out that North Korea has signed agreements before with no intention of keeping them. Even as it signed the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and the agreement for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, it was secretly going ahead with its nuclear programs. Many conservatives are in effect asking, "What sense does it make to negotiate agreements with liars?" There's no assurance that they will actually carry out their end of the bargain.

But by that argument there would be little or no point to any sort of talks or negotiations, for many countries have cheated or reneged on such agreements – including the U.S.

One thing this deal has going for it, which the one of 1994 did not, is that it proceeds by small tangible steps instead of going for the complete package. Under the previous arrangement, North Korea received over $2 billion in fuel oil without being compelled to show much in the way of compliance. And the Americans seemed to lose interest in constructing the light-water reactors that had been promised.

Another plus in this deal is the involvement of countries like Russia and China – especially China. North Korea is heavily dependent on China for food and energy aid. And when North Korea exploded its nuclear bomb last year, China joined the international community in agreeing to impose sanctions. Whether it ever actually carried through is another question, of course. But the other participants in the talks – Russia, China, Japan and South Korea – have all agreed to put pressure on North Korea to comply with the conditions of the new deal.

Deputy National Security Advisor Elliot Abrams objected to the provision that would remove North Korea from the list of state sponsors of terrorism before it has abandoned its nuclear program. Many analysts consider North Korea to be a high risk: because it is so desperate for cash, it may sell nuclear technology to any potential buyer.

The former U.S. ambassador to the U.N., John Bolton, went out of his way to condemn the deal as a failure. But the only thing that would satisfy him is the overthrow of the Kim Jong Il regime.

Framing the story

In view of the pressure put on the Bush administration to soften its tough stance with North Korea, it is surprising how much criticism the deal has received. Even those who admit that it's about as much as North Korea is willing to budge in the present circumstance characterize the agreement as an about-face by the Bush administration. The general tone of the critics seems to be too little too late. Had the Bush administration put aside its tough talk and sat down with representatives of the Kim Jong Il regime a few years ago, perhaps the missile tests and the detonation of the nuclear bomb could have been avoided. Such critics pooh-pooh the deal as little more than an attempt by the Bush administration to save face.

Such criticism often has as its frame the story that Kim Jong Il was launched on his nuclear course by being named as part of the infamous Axis of Evil. When he saw what happened to the regime of Saddam Hussein, he quickly geared up to protect himself in the only way he knew how: by getting the nuclear bomb. While there may be some credibility to this scenario, it ignores the fact that the administrations of both Bush senior and Bill Clinton unsuccessfully negotiated with the North Korean regime to put aside its nuclear ambitions.

Critics on the right highlight the evil nature of the North Korean regime. As it elevated Kim Il Sung and the son to divine status and established a tiny coterie in luxury, this regime systematically repressed and enslaved millions, sending untold numbers to slave labor camps and death camps as harsh as anything witnessed under Stalin. It is to blame for the starvation of over one million of its people by its centralist policies. In its attempt to wipe out dissent and Christianity, it has sent entire families to camps, to torture and to death. It is undoubtedly one of the cruelest dictatorships on the planet. But it has succeeded again and again in extorting large scale aid from the West, which serves only to prop up a corrupt dictatorship. Such critics charge that the U.S. has once again submitted to nuclear blackmail.

They forget, however, that toppling dictators can lead to even greater levels of starvation, violence and dislocation. Refusing

See **Korea** *on page 3*

News

New fight, old foe: Slavery

Jane Lampman

Zach Hunter was only 12 years old when he became an abolitionist. During Black History Month three years ago, as he read about Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass, he thought he, too, would have fought against slavery if he'd lived back then. But to his astonishment, Zach found soon afterward that people are still held as slaves today.

"When I learned there were about 27 million slaves in the world, it blew me away," says the high school freshman from Atlanta. "I wondered what I could do." He noticed loose change lying around the house, and a project was born. He formed Loose Change to Loosen Chains, and with the help of friends, collected some $10,000 to fight modern-day slavery.

This year, Zach is part of a much broader antislavery initiative, serving as student spokesman for "The Amazing Change." Next month marks the 200th anniversary of the end of the British slave trade, which was spurred by a young parliamentarian and reformer, William Wilberforce. A feature film on Wilberforce, "Amazing Grace," opens in US theaters nationwide on Feb. 23. The filmmakers are partnering with modern antislavery organizations to enlist students and others in a contemporary abolitionist movement. (See: www.theamazingchange.com).

For his part, Zach has penned a book, *Be the Change*, and travels across the country to speak to young people at music festivals, schools, and churches. "I tell them they can channel their passion into something that makes a difference," he says. "Small groups of people have changed things all through history."

Slavery is illegal everywhere in the world, yet it persists. Zach finds inspiration in the courage of Wilberforce, who kept fighting under difficult circumstances. The reformer spent 20 years collecting evidence of the crimes of Britain's slave trade. He introduced bills that were repeatedly rejected by parliament before the trade was finally ended in 1807.

The Amazing Change campaign encourages people to sign a petition to end modern-day slavery, donate to the cause, and learn how they can take an active part in the movement. A percentage of funds donated will help four nonprofit groups (Free the Slaves, International Justice Mission, Rugmark, and Child Voice International) collect evidence, go to court to free people from current forms of slavery, and help former slaves establish a new life.

While slavery takes different forms today, the impact remains devastating to lives around the globe, according to UN and US government statistics. An estimated 300,000 children have been forced to serve as child soldiers in more than 30 conflicts. Each year, human trafficking for sexual servitude or forced labor moves 800,000 people across international borders, including some 17,500 foreigners trafficked into the United States. Some 200,000 people are considered to live enslaved in the US.

The number of bonded slaves – men, women, and children who toil in agriculture or industries – has reached an estimated 20 million worldwide, says Free the Slaves. While total figures for slaves vary (the International Labor Organization has used 12.3 million for forced labor and sexual servitude), the 27 million estimate Zach Hunter cites is widely supported.

Remarkably, many slaves are in the public eye, yet invisible. For example, Kim, a young teen from a family of Tibetan exiles, was surreptitiously sold by a relative to an American minister traveling in India. He brought her back to a rural town in Massachusetts in 1985, where she became his sex slave and household servant. The pastor told Kim her family would be thrown in jail if she told anyone, so while she attended school, she kept the secret for five years. Only when Kim learned her cousins were to share the same fate did she go to the police.

Kim's poignant story is told in *Not for Sale: The Return of the Global Slave Trade and How We Can Fight It*, by David Batstone, one of three new books associated with the Amazing Change campaign. A professor of ethics at the University of San Francisco, Dr. Batstone traveled to five continents last year to investigate the workings of modern slavery, including going undercover to gather evidence. He defines slavery as "forcing someone else's labor without compensation, and using violence to keep them in their position."

Batstone's interest in the subject was first ignited, he says in an interview, when his favorite Indian restaurant, where he and his wife ate regularly, figured in an exposé by the San Francisco Chronicle. The story revealed that the young waitresses at the restaurant had been brought from India against their will and were also forced to perform sexual favors. The restaurant owner had trafficked in hundreds of young girls and boys.

"In the US, 47 percent of trafficking is in the commercial sex business," Batstone adds. The women are brought mostly from China, Mexico, and southeast Asia.

On his journeys, Batstone found that the most prevalent form of slavery globally is in agriculture, involving labor in rice mills or on plantations, as well as rock quarries and brick kilns. In some cases, people borrow small amounts of money from a local landowner to buy food or pay for a wedding, and the lender begins adding egregious levels of interest, requiring work until it's paid off. "In India, I met a family of four generations of women," Batstone says, "great-grandmother to daughter, who had spent their entire lives under obligation to a landowner for a loan the great-grandfather had taken out for the equivalent of $10. This is illegal, but hardly enforced."

While exploring this dark side of the global economy, Batstone found a silver lining: "a rising tide of modern-day abolitionists who are building an underground railroad for the 21st century." So inspired was he by the efforts of many small, understaffed, and underfunded groups working to free people, that the focus of his book shifted to profiling these new abolitionists.

He decided to mount his own international advocacy and fundraising project, too: the "Not for Sale Campaign" (www.notforsalecampaign.org). The campaign enlists athletes, musicians, and others in "making whatever you love best an abolitionist activity."

But more is needed than raising awareness and funds, Batstone says. "People who should be acting to stop slavery say they don't know where it is." So his students at the University of San Francisco have taken on the job: mapping slavery in the area – where it occurs in agriculture, the restaurant business, domestic servitude, etc. They are also creating a model for how to map slavery so that students and others could do the same in other cities. "We'll take that report each year to the mayor's office, the chief of police, and the media, saying 'Here's where slavery can be found in our city,' " he says. "My students are unbelievably charged up."

Zach Hunter, too, is enthused about what young people can accomplish. "My vision is that my generation would be written about in the history books as a generation that really cared about others and brought about change," he says.

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Peace and Reconciliation with Whom?

John Bolt

I read the letter sent by the Committee for Contact with the Government (*CC*, February 19) to Prime Minister Harper about Canada's mission in Afghanistan with a great deal of interest. I appreciate the restrained tone of the letter, a restraint not always present in such communications. Furthermore, the letter builds most of its case on a CRC synodically vetted report on war and peace (*CRC Synod 2006*). This latter feature is arguably not as praiseworthy as it initially sounds since the impetus for the report and its content came from the same source that now cites it, but be that as it may. One can expect and must accept a certain amount of ecclesiastical bureaucratic incestuousness in these matters.

There remains something profoundly disquieting however about this letter as a witness of the Church of Jesus Christ to civil authority. The letter acknowledges the need for governments to establish security but calls the government to push for greater emphasis on a "Peace, Justice, and Reconciliation Action Plan" which it describes as "a thoughtful approach to the search for culturally appropriate ways to achieve accountability with forgiveness and reconciliation as a basis for lasting peace, from the local to national institutions." The letter then faults the priority still given to security interests and pleads for more attention to such peace and reconciliation initiatives, asks the government to include the *CCG* in further developments and discussions and pledges to "work with other faith communities and civil society to deepening our ethical understanding of, and constructive contribution to Canada's international responsibilities."

Numerous questions come to mind here. Exactly how does forgiveness and reconciliation figure into the mandate of governments? Are states capable of this task? But, as importantly, since forgiveness and reconciliation in Jesus Christ are exactly the church's message of good news to the world, where is the gospel in this letter? When the letter calls for forgiveness and reconciliation, to whom is it speaking? Is it calling Islamic Jihadists (i.e. the Taliban) to repent for the evil perpetrated on their fellow citizens? Is it calling for the creation of a civil society that freely allows the Christian church to be active as a matter of human right (The United Nations Declaration of Universal Human Rights lists freedom of religion right at the top)? It is remarkable that none of this clearly Christian moral witness is even mentioned in the letter. All we get are vague generalities about peace and reconciliation, nice sounds with no substance.

What the letter writers seem to forget is that reconciliation requires a context. The fact of the matter is that reconciliation is a Christian notion – not an Islamic one – and that diplomatic moves toward reconciliation require a framework that has been established in those nations that were Christianized. The just war tradition itself, one must never forget, is the product of Christian civilizing pressure. Why should one treat an enemy honorably? Because he too is God's image bearer. To speak about reconciliation in the context of a religious mentality that understands peace through conquest is not credible, it is imprudent and dangerous. If one wants proof positive of this one need only look at the one shining example of a truth and reconciliation process that actually worked – South Africa after apartheid. South Africa is hardly out of the woods yet, but the remarkable progress that has been made, in large measure thanks to the work of such churchmen as Desmond Tutu, was only possible because the two parties that needed to be reconciled could be appealed to in terms of a common allegiance to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

What this means is that the Christian church's most and, I suggest *only direct* responsibility for peace, justice, truth and reconciliation in our broken, war-torn, hating world, is to redouble our efforts to bring the gospel of God's reconciling love through word and deed to the whole world. That is where our attention, our energy, our witness needs to be directed. And because the letter to the Prime Minister fails to even mention the gospel – substituting a vague solidarity "with other faith communities" – it fails as a witness of the church of Jesus Christ and it fails our Lord.

John Bolt is Professor of Systematic Theology at Calvin Theological Seminary, and the author of A Free Church, A Holy Nation: Abraham Kuyper's American Public Theology

Politics

Parliamentary chambers

Principalities & Powers
David T. Koyzis

When I was a child I wanted to be an architect. Though a high school drafting course persuaded me of the wisdom of considering another vocation, I have always had an interest in how people design the buildings where they live their lives. Readers will not be surprised to know that I have a special interest in political architecture. American public buildings typically imitate classical antiquity, in conformity with the founders' aspirations to draw on Greek and Roman republican precedents for their own constitution. By contrast, Canada's Parliament is housed in buildings drawing on the 19th century gothic revival in England.

What about the parliamentary chambers themselves? The British House of Commons has been destroyed twice, once in a fire in 1834 and again in 1941 during the German blitz. Both times it was rebuilt along the lines of the original St. Stephen's Chapel, which had been the private chapel of the king until the 16th century. Much as choristers had faced each other across the chapel floor, so also did members of parliament while conducting the affairs of state in the same space. Government MPs would sit to the speaker's right, while opposition MPs would sit to his left.

This underscores the adversarial character of politics in the Westminster tradition, where a two-party system took root beginning in the 18th century. When the government changes, the parties simply switch sides. Like the earlier worshipers at vespers in St. Stephen's, members of parliament engage in the daily stylized liturgical ritual of question period, where the rhetorical flourishes nevertheless fail to match the measured literary cadences of Archbishop Cranmer's Book of Common Prayer.

By contrast, most continental European parliaments, such as the Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, are arranged in semicircular chambers, with deputies fanning out in three directions from the speaker's chair. Right-wing parties are typically seated to the speaker's right, while left-wing parties sit to his left. Centrist parties are located in between. No one switches sides when governments change, because governments are typically coalition governments between two or more parties. Because these coalitions change, no party is likely to regard another as permanent opposition, because they could easily become partners in a future government. This means that the adversarial character of proceedings, while not altogether absent, is somewhat muted.

When the Commons chamber was to be rebuilt after the German blitz, there was talk of reconstructing it along continental European lines. But Winston Churchill opposed the idea, fearing that any change in the physical layout of the chamber would affect the character of the proceedings. "We shape our buildings, and afterwards our buildings shape us," he is reputed to have said.

Legislative Assembly of the state of Victoria, Melbourne

Last year I was privileged to visit Melbourne, Australia, where I was given a personal tour of the Victorian state parliament building. In the federal and state parliamentary chambers the arrangement is something of a composite of British and European forms. Members mostly face each other across the floor, but at the far end from the speaker the seats form a U, as seen in the accompanying photograph.

Is one arrangement obviously better than the others? Is the British arrangement more likely to encourage thorough scrutiny of government legislation than the semicircular chamber? Or is the latter more likely to lead to achieving compromise and consensus across partisan lines than the former? I doubt there can be a simple answer to these questions. What *can* be said is that, whatever the physical arrangement of our parliamentary chambers, our representatives have a divinely-given responsibility to seek public justice to the best of their ability.

David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario, and is the author of the award-winning Political Visions and Illusions *(InterVarsity Press). His weblog can be found at:* <http://byzantinecalvinist.blogspot.com/>.

Korea *continued from page 1*

aid, many have warned, could result in turning almost an entire nation of over 22 million people into refugees.

How one sees this agreement depends a lot on how one frames it.

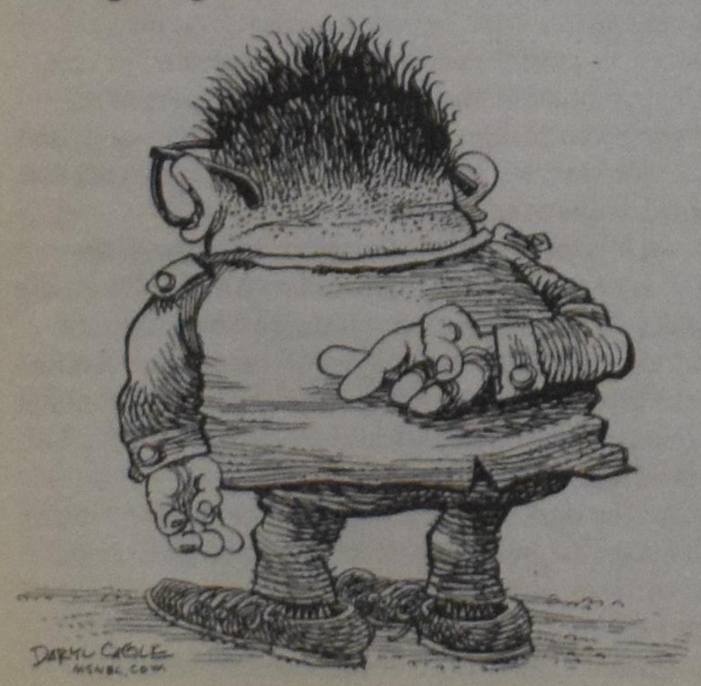
Gary Samore, vice-president of the Council of Foreign Relations, called the agreement "a wise compromise" for the Bush administration. He added: "I think the Bush administration should be supported for recognizing that it was better to accept a limited agreement which stabilized the situation and capped North Korea's production of plutonium instead of holding out for a much more desirable but unattainable agreement that would require full disarmament."

Even U.S. President Bush admitted it was only a first step. Condoleeza Rice said, "This is the first quarter, not the fourth."

There are still big questions remaining, of course. Verification of compliance will be a big problem. North Korea is a huge secretive country, and there are no signs that the regime will grant inspectors a great deal of latitude to move around the country. It has even balked at granting U.S. diplomats passage overland through the demilitarized zone.

According to *The Economist*, no one realistically expects North Korea to move quickly toward complete de-nuclearization, no matter what the agreement says. Peter Hayes, a professor of international relations and director of the Nautilus Institute, points out that the shipments of fuel oil to the country amount to only a small fraction of what it would have gained had it stuck to the previous agreement and obtained the light-water reactors. It could have sold the excess electrical energy to South Korea for vastly more than the fuel oil is worth.

He also points out that given the sad state of the country's infrastructure and lack of industry, it will have difficulty absorbing the amount of fuel oil promised in the agreement.



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Editorial

What are you giving up for Lent?

Harry der Nederlanden

As I write this, Ash Wednesday is just a couple of days behind me. It is the beginning of Lent. When I was a boy, most CRC people had only a vague idea of what Lent was, and very few of us took note of Ash Wednesday – unless we had Catholic friends. Like me, some of you may even have embarrassed yourself and your Catholic friend by telling her she had a dirty smudge on her forehead and perhaps offering to wipe it off.

Until rather recently, I wager most of us took Lent in stride, dismissing it – tolerantly, to be sure – as part of the Catholic mumbo-jumbo and ritualism that we of the Reformation churches have left behind. That has been changing very rapidly. Many Protestant churches, particularly the mainline ones, have eagerly embraced the church calendar, saints days excepted. Most of our churches now remind us that Lent has begun, and fellow Protestants are likely to ask us what we are giving up for Lent.

It's often not a deeply serious inquiry. Often Lent observances fall in the same category as New Year's resolutions. By now most of us have forgotten those, because making them was merely a bit of fun, a ritual that is more like a game than setting a new course for our lives.

Even though North American culture has been becoming steadily more secularized – or maybe because of it – our entire society has been made aware of the beginning of Lent. Television cameras beam images of Mardi Gras into every living room in North America. Mardi Gras means Fat Tuesday. In anticipation of forty days without meat, Catholics marked the day before Ash Wednesday with a big feast. It gradually turned into a bit of a carnival, and Fat Tuesday gradually got a little fatter, expanding into several days, and it also got a bit wilder. The Catholic Church certainly did not mean for it to turn into the orgy of partying, drinking and sexual licentiousness that marks Mardi Gras in New Orleans. In some parts of the world it is actually called Carnival, but this originally meant "farewell to the flesh" [from the Latin for flesh (carne) and farewell (vale)].

Although Mardi Gras is a baby of the Christian calendar, it has clearly strayed far from home like the prodigal son, but it shows little or no signs of returning. It's little wonder our Calvinist forebears would have little to do with the church calendar, for they associated it with debased holidays like this. Of course, Christmas has become similarly debased with all its consumerism and self-indulgence.

But only the most puritanical among us are ready to erase Christmas from the church calendar. Christmas and Easter have, of course, been celebrated by the church from its infancy. Easter was, according to the book I consulted, part of Pascha, which embraced what we now call Good Friday, Easter and Ascension. The original Lenten fast was for the two or three day period of Pascha. Historians surmise that it got stretched to forty days as part of the preparation of catechumens getting ready for baptism at Easter or of penitents who were renewing the baptismal vows at Easter. The whole church began to participate in the process. Seems like a laudable thing to do. Besides, forty days has such biblical resonance, doesn't it? It rained forty days; Moses was on the mountain with God for forty days; Israel wandered in the wilderness for forty years; and Jesus spent 40 days in the desert being tempted by Satan.

But Catholics are no longer asked to fast for 40 days of Lent. In 1966 (Vatican II) the days for fasting were reduced to two – Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. But people still commit themselves to special spiritual exercises to observe Lent, usually something that involves self-denial (see Petsche's column, p. 15). The question, "What are you giving up for Lent?" foregrounds the element of self-denial.

We used to joke about it: "I'm giving up jogging." I've also heard: "I'm giving up spinach." I've told my wife: "I'm giving up wild women, corn whiskey and fast cars." But the response is, of course: "It has to hurt. You have to give up something that you like." [My wife knows that I don't like wild women, corn whiskey and fast cars. They all upset my digestion.]

It has to hurt.... The forty days of Lent are launched on Ash Wednesday (not introduced until the Middle Ages) with ashes, the biblical symbol for mourning and for remembering our mortality ("sackcloth and ashes"; "dust to dust, ashes to ashes"). So the entire period is seen as one of penitence and penance. As one Catholic theologian put it, it became a period to dwell on our guilt and sin and "on avoiding punishment for sin."

Later in the Middle Ages, for some of the faithful Lent became a time for meditating on the sufferings of Jesus, and, as we still see in the Philippines, for participating in those sufferings, whether imaginatively in such exercises as the "stations of the cross" or by physical self-mortification. Lent was a studiously somber time in the calendar of the church. Certainly not a time for joyful dancing and singing and celebration.

The shadow of God's wrath and punishment on sin falls across Lent. It is a time when we are to contemplate our sins and the sufferings they caused the One crucified in our place.

That's not unfamiliar to those of us who have grown up in CRC churches and who have had the preparatory form for the celebration of the Lord's Supper imprinted on our memories. During the week leading up to the celebration, we used to be exhorted to examine ourselves and the depth of our sin and misery. The old form had the phrase: "...that we may be admonished to loathe ourselves and humble ourselves before God." But that phrase has long ago been consigned to the dustbin of old-style Calvinism.

Those preparatory forms read a week before the Sunday on which the Lord's Supper was celebrated in effect turned that entire week into a somber Lenten period of reflection on our unworthiness. It's no wonder we didn't want to celebrate the Lord's Supper more than four times a year.

However, the Lord's Supper is a feast: yes, it is a remembrance of Christ's death on the cross, but it is a remembrance illuminated by the knowledge that he is the risen Lord. It's a party that looks forward to the day that we will celebrate together with all the saints and with our Redeemer and King in the new heaven and the new earth.

Christian believers began to get together on the first day of the week as opposed to the Jewish Sabbath not just to distinguish themselves from the Jews, but to mark the resurrection of their Lord. Every Sunday is a celebration of Easter that launches us into the week ahead filled with opportunities for serving our Lord as part of a new people in a renewed and restored creation. The Kingdom of God is on the horizon. On the horizon? No, it is nearer than that: it is among us. Our Lord is no longer on the cross; he entered into us by the outpouring of his Spirit. Having paid the debt, he now reigns with God in the highest heaven, and in the midst of the sufferings and troubles of this earth we may know that he lives with us in this time, in this history, on this earth – and that he is working all things out to the well-being of those who have been engrafted in him.

"This is the day that the Lord has made!" the pastor used to declare at the opening of the service. "Let us rejoice and be glad in it." And that declaration rang out over the entire week ahead – in fact, it rings out over this entire dispensation. This is the day of the Lord, the day that shall surely be, when the earth will be filled with the glory of God as the water covers the sea. We gather together every Sunday and we celebrate the Lord's Supper to be revived with a few waves of that glory washing toward us in the Kingdom tide.

Lent still means Spring in the Dutch language. That is its derivation. Yet, it is usually turned into a somber season. But we don't look forward to spring with a heavy heart, weighed down by the burdens of our sin and mortality. We look forward to the springing up of new life. Similarly, the main melody of Lent should be joy, anticipation, excitement. The old is gone! Behold, the new is coming and has come.

By all means, observe Lent if you are so inclined. But don't let it be a period of gloom and of turning inward. Not that this should not be a moment in our spiritual lives. It ought to be a moment in our weekly worship services too and in our daily devotions. We are grateful, and we praise the Lord for what he has done only when we realize the extent and the depth of our sins. In fact, our self-examination should extend to our part in aggravating the sufferings and injustices of our world, and the slovenly way we have dealt with the good earth that the Lord has given us.

But we repent not in an attempt to take upon ourselves part of the suffering that atones for sin. Christ did it all. There's nothing we need to add to that. There's nothing we can add to that. Our repentance is a turning our faces toward the new future, and an expectation that we will be mobilized as part of the people of God who are part of that future.

Yes, let the dark tones of suffering and guilt be heard, but play it on the base pedals; let the main melody be one of joy – joy at the victory over death by our now and future King.

Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!

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1 Hiscott St, St. Catharines ON L2R 1C7
Tel: (905) 682-8311; 1-800-969-4838
Fax: (905) 682-8313; Web site: www.christiancourier.ca
Publications Mail Registration No. 09375
We acknowledge the assistance of the Government of Canada, through the Publications Assistance Program (PAP), toward our mailing costs. Canada

Ideas

The miracle of the little tree

Didy Prinzen

The little tree didn't understand what was going on. It had already felt its buds starting to stir, though ever so lightly. Filled with anticipation, it knew that spring was just around the corner. But then something happened.

Late in the afternoon a warm soothing rain began falling, but when the sun went down the rain became cold. Very cold! For some reason the rain seemed unable to run off its buds, branches and its trunk anymore. And the little tree slowly felt itself freeze.

The rain kept falling all night. And in the dark the little tree felt its branches becoming heavier and heavier. After a while some of them nearly touched the ground so heavy they were, and it was getting tired of holding them up. It became afraid that they would snap and break off.

Finally daylight came and, oh, what a scare it got! It saw itself covered all over with a thick layer of ice. Ice all over its trunk. Ice covering its branches. Ice on its already swelling buds.

While it stood there, ice-cold and exhausted from holding up its branches, it suddenly heard children voices calling out, "Oh, look at that beautiful little tree!"

That was highly unusual – for in winter it had always been just a bare little tree that was never noticed. But the sun had come out from behind a cloud and the little tree now saw itself sparkle like diamonds in the sky – like the stars do at night! Wow!

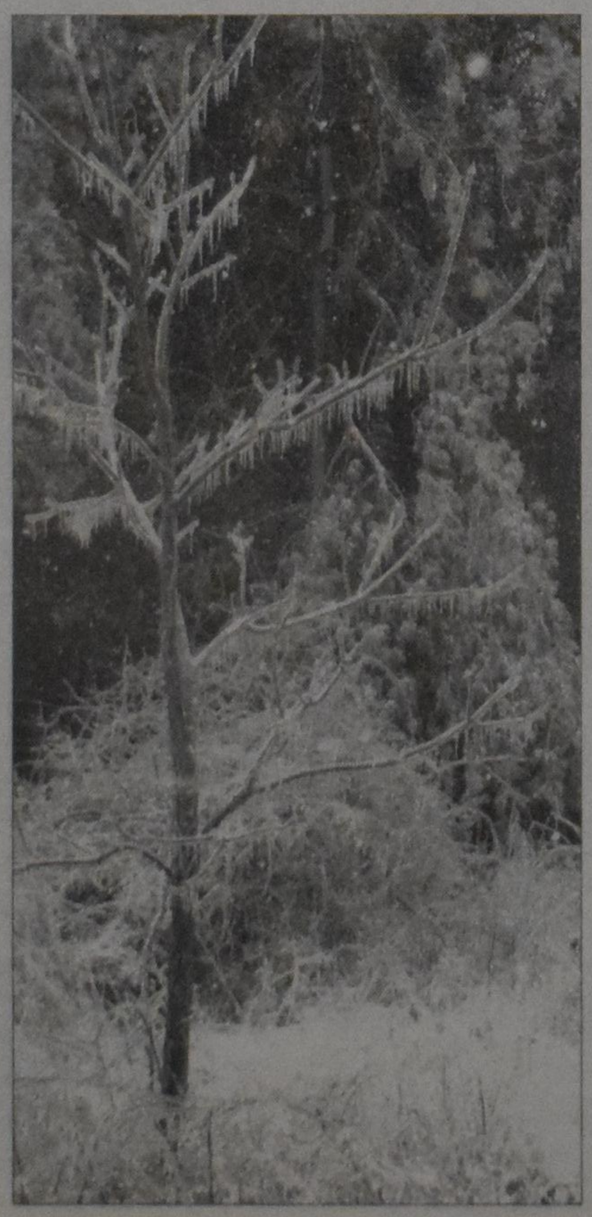
The children, who had always just walked by going to school without ever giving it a glance, now stood still to ooh! and ah! over it! The little tree that had been so tired from being plain and bare had become beautiful overnight.

However, despite the attention it got that morning from passers-by, it became more and more tired and deadly worried. Even though the sun was shining, it could not feel the warmth of the sun. The little tree got so heavy that it was afraid that it would collapse and die of the cold. So it started to cry.

It cried and cried. It just couldn't stop crying. Its tears dripped and dripped all day long off its branches and rolling down its trunk. It couldn't understand why it couldn't hold its tears and stop crying. Maybe it was because the more it cried, the better it started to feel.

Then at the end of the day it stopped. Suddenly, it felt itself turning all warm and light again. But at the same time it noticed that it wasn't sparkling anymore. It had turned once more into just a bare little tree that wasn't receiving any attention.

The little tree was happy just the same and greatly relieved because it knew that it would stay warm now. Soon the sun would warm its buds more and more each day until they burst open to cover all its branches with pretty, green leaves. And it decided that it would like that a lot better than to be beautiful for just one day but be so cold and so scared.



Our old apple tree

After the storm
last fall,
our gnarled and twisted
old tree was left
bowed and bent,
and seemingly
had lost her life —
a life so fruitfully spent.

And yet
one sunny morning
early that very next spring
she burst once again
into glorious showers
of silvery white flowers.

That stately dowager
had staunchly defied fate;
and her fierce courage
and abundant flowering
made our tired old hearts
rejoice and sing.

Lini R.Grol

Multiculturalism: The new Trojan Horse

On this anniversary, let us try to see things as they are. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms has greatly complicated Canadian law and vastly expanded the power of Canadian judges. It has conferred new privileges and advantages on certain favoured subgroups of Canadian society. What it has not done, however, is to enhance the freedom of most Canadian citizens. If anything, it has reduced them.
(David Frum, *National Post*, February 10, 2007)

It often seems to me that Canada is best understood as a kind of theocracy – a country totally in the grip of a secular state religion.
(Robert Ivan Martin, professor of law, and author of The *Most Dangerous Branch: How the Supreme Court of Canada Has Undermined Our Law and Our Democracy, 2003*)

A quarter century has now passed since the enactment of the much-heralded *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. So is it time to celebrate? It all depends.

Those who have embraced the new ideals of equality and multiculturalism are pleased with what they have accomplished. On the other hand, those who believe that the state must protect the most fundamental rights of conscience and religion are not in a celebrative mood at all. And they have plenty of reasons on their side.

Social engineers at work

The main problem is that the Charter has become a tool to change Canada from a country where freedom exists prior to the state, to one in which freedom is what the state allows. In other words, we are moving away from a civil society that is distinct (not separate) from the state to one in which increasing areas of life are politicized. Hence we are seeing courts and human rights commissions play fast and loose with our historic freedoms in order to create the newfangled rights of certain select pressure groups.

Rev. Raymond de Souza is an eloquent defender of freedom. In his February 15 column in the *National Post* he points out that in the historic documents enshrining the freedom of the citizenry, going back to the Magna Carta of 1215, freedom of conscience and religion has been the bedrock of a free society.

However, the 1789 French *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* gave "short shrift" to that respect for religious liberty. De Souza writes that this is not surprising for a document that declares: "The principle of all sovereignty resides essentially in the nation. No body, nor individual may exercise any authority which does not proceed directly from the nation."

He believes that our Charter's record in the past 25 years has not been encouraging. The human rights tribunals and the courts have not been sympathetic to religious minorities. On the contrary, they have been more inclined to favour equality claims at the expense of religious liberty. De Souza sees this in our future: "As the vast apparatus of the Canadian state moves in certain respects toward enforcing a secular orthodoxy, infringements on religious liberty are sure to become more, not less, frequent."

Multiculturalism is the key

At the opposite end of the Charter evaluators is Janice Gross Stein, Professor of Conflict Management, and director of the Munk Centre for International Studies at the University of Toronto. Her essay "Living Better Multiculturally," published in the September 2006 issue of the *Literary Review of Canada*, is a provocative yet noteworthy article. Especially Christians should take a keen interest in her arguments, for they are not derived from the common law tradition but are more in line with the 1789 *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen.*

She thinks that the time has come to reconsider whether churches and synagogues, which are recognized by the state and receive certain tax benefits, should not be compelled to abide by the Charter's requirements for inclusion and equality. She describes her own dispute with the leadership of the synagogue, where she is not treated as an equal to the male members, as an injustice that must be remedied.

Stein argues that Canada has officially declared itself to be a multicultural nation and that therefore, as the Charter states, we are committed to design our policies and

Continued on page 6

Christian Courier

Member of Canadian Church Press and Evangelical Press Association

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Subscriptions:	**Canada (G.S.T. incl.)**	**USA**	**Overseas**
one yr. (25 issues)	$44.00	$40.00 US	$85.00
two yrs. (50 issues)	$80.00	$75.00 US	

Advertising deadlines: display and classified advertising: Tuesday, 9 a.m. (13 days before publication date) See classified pages or web site **www.christiancourier** for more details.
(ISSN 1192-3415) Published biweekly on Mondays.

Address all correspondence to: 1 Hiscott St, St. Catharines ON L2R 1C7
Tel: 905-682-8311 or 1-800-969-4838, or fax: 905-682-8313
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Seasons

Snowbound in Hamilton

Flowers & Thistles

Curt Gesch

It's time to revise our children's science curriculum. Every student in North America studies various ecological complexes called *biomes*. These include the tundra, taiga, temperate deciduous forest, tropical rain forest, grassland, and desert – to name just the major terrestrial biomes.

Students learn about natural systems and how human activities affect them. But they don't study cities or urban areas very much. I propose that all Canadian schoolchildren be required to study urban or suburban biomes. These biomes are not so much *affected* by human activities as they are *determined* by human activities.

Last month I was stranded by a snowstorm and had the opportunity to study the ecological interactions in the urban biome called *Hamilton, Ontario*. I spent some of my time in the biological niche called "Downtown" defined as living space between James Street and Queen Street, but I also took short excursions onto what is curiously called "The Mountain."

This is what I discovered.

– Human dwellings in the Downtown region are constructed largely of some sort of clayish material, perhaps from the subsoil.

– The topsoil is deep and fertile. Human dwellings are typically tall, slender and peaked, suggesting rapid growth and a high degree of phototropism, probably accentuated by competition with hardwood trees about one hundred to one hundred twenty-five years ago, at which time there was some sort of massive ecological change, perhaps the influx of introduced European species of wildlife.

– Recently-constructed human dwellings often vary from the typical in shape, being largely rectangular in shape, considerably larger in volume, with many more exits on the outside of the many-floored dwellings, apparently one per human "nest". It has been suggested that these more recent human dwellings show the influence of multi-celled purple martin colonies often found in surrounding farmland.

– Trees are hardwoods, typical of the northern extremities of the Carolinian forest. Mature maples and some oak predominate.

– Terrestrial species observed include members of the families *Canidae* and *Felidae,* often interacting in a way that suggests that the first two exist in some sort of parasitic relationship with their human hosts (*Homo sapiens*), although the relationship may be symbiotic in some as-yet-to-be-determined way.

– Arboreal mammals of the family *Sciuridae* abound, including many black or melanistic specimens which have described by R. Elisabeth Gesch, a previous explorer of the region, as "cast-iron squirrels." These rodents have been observed on human dwellings, resting on porches, and otherwise living in an apparently fearless relationship to humans whom – it has been observed – have been predators of *Sciuridae* in other nearby biomes.

– Bird life was abundant but limited to relatively few species, all pointing to massive colonization from European species, perhaps concurrent with the afore-mentioned massive ecological changes that accompanied the development of the tall, slender human dwellings mentioned above.

– European house sparrows were seen competing with European starlings for nesting cavities, successfully defending only those natural or human-made cavities of less than six centimetres. The aggressive cry of the house sparrow is best represented by the following song-o-gram: *chirrrrp*. (Research indicates that the mating cries, alarm cries, I-wish-I-had-more-sleep-cries, and feeding cries are identical to the aggression cry.)

– European starlings were evident almost constantly during daylight hours. Being speedy fliers, starlings moved from place to place with bursts of wing beats, followed by long glides. When on foot, they appeared as portly, curious, active birds, which moved about with a proprietary air, looking at food, housing, or other profitable possibilities. (Interestingly, one art historian suggested that starlings on stroll could have been the inspiration for Rembrandt van Rijn's paintings of prosperous Dutch burghers.)

– Extremely cold weather prompted adaptive behavior by various birds: starlings clustered near the chimneys of large human colonies, indicating yet again the intelligence of the starling and its ability to co-opt resources of other species.

– Rows of European rock doves, colloquially known as "pigeons," lined up on the outside entrance railings of human colony dwellings, absorbing weak winter sunlight.

I was also able to conduct some investigations of the human species during the harsh winter season. Below are some conclusions based on random sampling. Definitive sociological testing has yet to be completed.

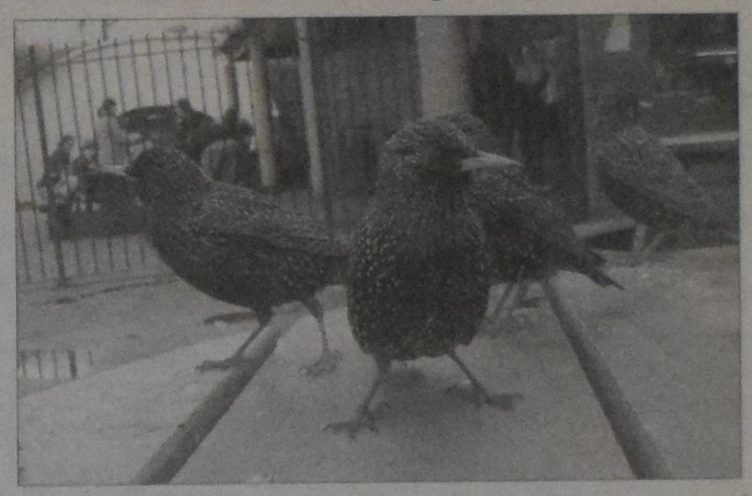
– The human species seems more inclined to communicate with small members of its own pod, or family group than with strangers. A survey of responses to the typical, nearly universal, human greeting *hello*, revealed that merely two out of five humans replied to the common greeting during cold, cloudy, snowy weather.

– Of those replying, anecdotal evidence suggests that humans who were older members of the species, those more poorly dressed, and poorly-shaven males were more likely to communicate in return.

– Somewhat surprisingly, during periods following heavy snowfall, continued cold, but lighter winds, almost 80 percent responded to the common greeting. This may be related to the commonality of purpose during those weather periods: most humans were cleaning the entrances to their dwellings.

– When the *hello* greeting was accompanied by offers of help in clearing dwelling-entrances, the response rate was 100 per cent.

These preliminary findings about the Hamilton, Ontario, biome need to be verified by more rigorous ecological research during the next winter season. In the meanwhile, a preliminary survey during the summer season is an essential next step in mapping the complete set of interrelationships in this urban biome. I am awaiting funding.



Curt Gesch is a re-retired school teacher who is positively starling-ish about investigating natural phenomenon.

legislation "in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians."

She is proud of all the good things that have been accomplished by our shared tolerance and inclusiveness, and she thinks we have done much better than our neighbour to the south as well as Old Europe. But she also believes that we still have not lived up to the full demands of the Charter claims, and she raises a host of questions.

"How committed are 'we' in Canada to the secularization of public space.... To what extent will the state, in the service of the freedom of religion, continue to allow churches, synagogues and mosques the right to exclusive interpretation of religious law when they have an impact on the fundamental rights of Canadians?

"...Are discriminatory religious practices against women a matter only for religious law, as is currently the case under Canadian law, which protects freedom of religion, or should the value of the Charter and of human rights commissions across Canada have some application when religious institutions are officially recognized and advantaged in fundraising? Does it matter that the Catholic Church, which has special entitlements given to it by the state and benefits from its charitable tax status, refuses to ordain women as priests?"

Stein writes that she is offended that the values she holds as Canadian citizen clash with her religious obligation, and she obviously wants the state to remove that conflict in her favour. It seems to escape her that such intervention of the state within the internal life of the synagogue amounts to an attack on the heart of this religious institution. In essence it would mean the destruction of that institution. That a member of the academic elite is able to make such an argument is a stark reminder of the extent the rot of totalitarian thought has spread in this country.

A doleful prospect

Ted Byfield is a veteran apologist for a robust Christianity, and he minces no words in his reaction to the Stein article, as published on the WorldNetDaily Web site. Under the heading, "Domination of Church by State," Byfield lets go this opening salvo:

"Canada's ideological left, confident in its control of academe, the Supreme Court and the federal Liberal Party, appeared this month ready to declare war on its most formidable enemy of all, namely conservative Christian churches that refuse to make their teachings conform to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms as defined by the Supreme Court."

Byfield writes that the main issue of Stein's essay is the question: "Whose values should prevail?" He responds:

"Her answer was clear: The Supreme Court's values should prevail. Then she played her trump card. Churches whose teachings fail to conform to the Charter should be denied charitable status in Canadian tax law and exemption from property taxes. To my knowledge it was the first time the tax threat was seriously levied. It will seek to force the churches to accept gay rights, abortion and (in the case of the Catholic and orthodox churches) female priests."

Continued on page 7

Multiculturalism *continued from page 6*

He predicts that a feminist plaintiff will soon appear in court to complain that her Charter right are compromised by her church's refusal to ordain her as a priest. And similar cases will be initiated challenging the churches' tax status, to be followed by challenges of their teachings on various moral questions.

Byfield foresees a doleful prospect. For church members would be told that their churches are unfit to exist in Canada, considered to be alien institutions propagating ideas and principles loathsome and not wanted here in "our pristine liberal paradise."

He thinks the Supreme Court judges may recognize – and possibly reconsider – that if they directly attack the churches, they will be fostering a deep sense of alienation ("sedition"); they will not only destroy the churches but the country, too.

No one can accuse Byfield of hedging his bets. What he pictures is indeed a doleful prospect. But will it become reality? Nobody knows. But when a high-profile academic advocates the draconian measures as professor Stein does, we should sit up and take notice.

So what should we do in meeting what may well be the most serious attack ever on the freedom of religion in this country? In suggesting a few options, I will focus on Christianity and the churches.

A historic opportunity?

What would happen if instead of resignedly waiting for the axe to drop, putting up a skirmish here and a protest there – while watching the Scott Brockies, the Dianne Hasketts, and the Chris Kemplings become isolated fatalities on the frontlines – we would prepare for a carefully thought-out strategic "counter offensive"? What might that look like, at least in part?

I suggest that our times call for extra-ordinary measures, and we should be thinking of the kind of public address to the Canadian government and people in which the best Christian apologists compose a clearly-written and substantive declaration of the Christian faith for our times.

We should be thinking of the sort of public summation contained in Augustine's *City of God* (426 A.D), John Calvin's address to the king of France in 1536, and the *Barman Declaration* of 1934 (German churches' rejection of Nazi ideology). All of these historic documents had in common a rejection of the then prominent paganism and a re-articulation of the Christian faith and its relevance for those times.

They were written in times of great turmoil and impending civilizational upheavals. We now live in such times, and they call for a similar kind of response.

Who will take on such an assignment? How do we break through the existing barriers and divisions within the Christian community itself? By not concentrating on them, but by building on the sort of cooperative alliances that have quietly been built among a variety of Christian leaders and institutions in this country.

The three things required to bring the participants in this project together are an unapologetic commitment to the historic Christian faith, insight into the spiritual/moral conditions of our culture, and a desire to serve the well-being of our nation at this critical juncture.

The envisioned declaration/address to the government and citizens of Canada needs to be of high quality, depth, and eloquence, so that even its critics will want to read it.

It should contain the following: (1) A robust articulation of biblical religion; (2) An in-depth analysis of the secular forces now shaping our culture; (3) An introduction into the relevance of biblical teachings for the right ordering of a free and open society.

Finally, the tone of this public document must not be one of anger and revenge, but one of love and servanthood. It must reflect the truth that Christ did not come to condemn the world but to save it (John 3:17).

Harry Antonides
hantonides@sympatico.ca.

Fundraising 1 – Moses

Reflections on Stewardship

Rick De Graaf

For the next three issues I thought I would do a series of reflections on fundraising from a biblical perspective. Though you may not be a fundraiser, a fundraiser may have impacted you at one time or another. The reason for writing this series is to caution both fundraisers and donors not to simply adopt secular fundraising techniques and approaches without some critical review from a biblical perspective. For instance, I'm alarmed by so much evidence of recognition or praise given to donors even in Christian circles which is in sharp contrast to what Jesus clearly taught:

"Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full." Matt. 6:1,2

For the first in the series, I thought I'd focus on the first fundraising campaign recorded in the Bible: when God instructed Moses to gather material resources to put build the first tabernacle.

As you may recall, God had called his people Israel out of slavery in Egypt and their exodus was extraordinary by God executing many miraculous acts. They left Goshen and its fertile deltaic pasturelands, to be led by God through Moses into the desert – a dry and desolate place, where they became directly dependent on God's hand. The desert became God's classroom where God trained the Israelites to become his people – to be fully dependent on him (the 'Creator' and not 'the created') for their living and to become an example by whom all peoples in the world would be blessed.

One of the things God wanted to do was to establish a means of close communication with his people. God wanted to live among his chosen people. At the same time, God wanted his people to break from the religious practices of the Egyptians and establish and learn his laws and ways that would honor him and prepare them to reject the detestable practices of the people who now inhabited the Promised Land. As a mark of being God's people, God designed a 'tabernacle' so that he could 'tabernacle' or live-with his people.

It is in this setting that we read how Moses receives detailed instructions on how to build and fundraise for the first tabernacle. In Exodus 25:1-3, we read:

The Lord said to Moses, "Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from each man whose heart prompts him to give. These are the offerings you are to receive from them: gold, silver and bronze..." and the shopping list goes on.

The key phrase I want to focus on is "whose heart prompts him to give". Moses was instructed not to command the people to give – but rather to invite giving. God was not looking for gifts given out duty or guilt or even for show "I'll look bad if I don't." God's focus is not on the externals but the internals. The heart is internal – it is deep – nothing is more internal than your heart. Giving is a deep thing, a spiritual loving conviction first, and a deep caring response. Even though our intellect may play a role, it is not the primary one – it is not necessarily logical to give – but it certainly is a love response – a gratitude response that thanks God for the ability and the desire to give.

What does this mean for Christian fundraising?

When God told Moses to accept gifts only from people "whose heart prompts [them] to give," Moses' role actually changed from a 'campaign director' to a pastoral role. Moses' concern changed from meeting an administrative and quantitative goal to a spiritual one. Moses could only accept gifts from people who gave for the right reason – a heart-felt or spiritual one.

In Christian fundraising, I believe the same concern for what prompts people to give needs to be the priority and not the goal – the dollar target! In our haste to raise the dollars needed we may run roughshod over the heart motive or we may offer other motives for giving: taxation benefits, the presidential givers club or other status or make-people-feel-good incentives. Instead, a Christian fundraiser spends her time carefully explaining the ministry she represents and is clear about how the ministry is connected with God's great Kingdom enterprise. As a Christian fundraiser, she gives an honest and frank report of the successes as well as the challenges as she represents the cause well and openly. The focus is not on winning a donation but to cultivate understanding and working with the donor to determine his or her heart connection to the cause.

When I, as a fundraiser see it that way, my work is honorable and every visit or call I make is used to stimulate a giving heart even if my own ministry does not get the benefit of a gift. In the whole of God's Kingdom enterprise, there is no competition, rather we all minister to God's prompting of a giver's heart.

Stewardly Tip: Do a 'heart-check'. Take some time out to reflect on where God is prompting you to give of your time, your talents and your treasures for the work of his Kingdom. We are often so busy doing that we forget to spend time to pray and set giving goals. When do you take a time-out to listen to the prompting in your heart?

Readers: Share your Stewardly Tips so that we all can make better use of the resources God has entrusted to us. Submit your suggestions (by mail to *Christian Courier* or by email to my address below) and provide your contact information so that we can acknowledge your contribution or ask you for more details.

Next issue: Fundraising 2 – David

Rick DeGraaf works for Christian Stewardship Services in Markham, Ontario Rick's email:rickd@csservices.ca

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Church

Worshiping God in a Chinese labor camp cesspool

It became his own 'private garden'

Dan Wooding

CHINA (ANS) – I have met some unusual people in my travels around the world, but one of the most remarkable was Pastor Wu*, who spent nearly six of his 18 years in prison in a Chinese labor camp working in a cesspool.

Scene inside a Chinese labor camp

I talked with Pastor Wu during a visit to China some time back. It was then that I discovered that each day, over a period of years, Pastor Wu would be lowered into a stinking putrid cesspool and, as he went down into the terrible place, a huge smile would envelope his face. As he shoveled out the vile waste-matter there to be used as fertilizer in the fields, he would begin to sing the old hymn, "I come to the garden alone, while the dew is still in on the roses..."

He told me, "As I sang, I would feel our Lord holding me tight in his everlasting arms. At that very moment, that cesspool became my own private garden. You see, this was a wonderful blessing for me because it was the only time I was alone from the prying eyes of the guards. I could now commune with God, praise his Name at the top of my voice, and recite scriptures that I had memorized. I have experienced how important it is for us Christians to memorize scriptures.

"People wonder how I could keep my faith during those 18 years in prison and labor camp, but I can say that God was with me during that whole time and I bear no ill feelings to those that put me there, even though there were many times I was ill-treated."

He said that the guards in the labor camp decided the best way they could punish him for his Christian faith was to have him work in the cesspool.

"Little did they realize this was to be a greatest blessing to me," said the pastor. "At that time, almost all of the prisoners were afraid to even approach the cesspool because all of the human waste from the entire camp of about 60,000 prisoners was deposited there. They were scared of picking up a fatal virus from it. I worked there for nearly six years.

"They thought they would re-educate me there, but they did not know that, during those years, I enjoyed so much to work in the cesspool. It was very deep and I would have to wade into it to scoop up the mess. The smell would be so strong that the guards and prisoners would get far way from me because of the stink. But I enjoyed the solitude of being alone ... with God!"

He went on to say, "It is easy for us to praise the Lord in freedom, but are we able to praise our Lord in these kind of circumstances? Because God was with me, I was able to praise him in such earthly misery because he never leaves or forsakes us. For 18 years, not only did I survive physically, but also I was able to forgive those that put me there. Today I continue to serve the Church in China."

Pastor Wu has since planted scores, if not hundreds of churches in China.

** Not his real name. It has been changed to protect his identity.*

Dan Wooding is an award winning British journalist now living in Southern California with his wife Norma. He is the founder and international director of ASSIST (Aid to Special Saints in Strategic Times) and the ASSIST News Service (ANS).

Church leaders urge Novartis to drop legal case on medicines in India

Geneva (ENI) – Archbishop Desmond Tutu has put his weight behind a campaign to get the Swiss pharmaceutical company Novartis to drop a law suit against the Indian government to challenge the patent law of the world's second most populous nation.

"People, not profits, must be at the centre of patent law for medicines," said Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Tutu, the former Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town in a statement backing a campaign by the Geneva-based Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance for universal access to essential medicines.

The EAA said in a February 14 statement that many civil society campaigners are pointing out that India's law contains elements that help put people before patents, "but Novartis is trying to force a change in the law".

"Novartis has been refused a patent for a cancer medicine, Gleevec, on the grounds that the medicine was simply a new form of an old medicine with a trivial change, something which cannot be patented under Indian law," noted the EAA. "Novartis is not only seeking to overturn this decision but also to challenge the law itself and the way in which India has implemented international trade rules on intellectual property."

Medicines manufactured in India are imported by many developing countries since India has become a manufacturing hub for generic versions of drugs patented elsewhere. More than half of the medicines currently used for HIV and AIDS treatment in developing countries come from India, said the EAA.

Ranjit Shahani, managing director of Novartis India, was, however, quoted by Asia News International on February 11 as saying that the significance of the case in India was beyond the issue of acquiring patent rights for Glivec as the drug is known in India.

"This whole case is about gaining clarity. Clarity is important not only for government, industry, but also for the patients," Shahani was quoted saying by ANI. "Patents save lives, and innovation and discovery is very important for public health. This case is not only about granting patents for Glivec, but also [so that] incremental innovations are granted patents."

India did not grant patents till 2005, till the World Trade Organization's Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement obligated it to review its policy.

The EAA said that in other countries where Novartis has obtained a patent for Gleevec, it is sold at US$2600 per patient a month. In India generic versions of the drug are sold for less than US$200 a patient per month.

The Rev. Ishmael Noko, general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, declared, "Novartis' proclaimed mission is 'to ease suffering and to enhance the quality of life'. But this case is not about prioritizing life. It has every appearance of protecting wealthy corporate interests at the expense of the health of millions for whom access to affordable medicines is a matter of life and death."

A ministerial declaration of the World Trade Organization in 2001 affirmed that international trade rules on patents "can and should be interpreted and implemented in a manner supportive of WTO members' right to protect public health and, in particular, to promote access to medicines for all".

The EAA said India has designed a patent system that aims to reward genuine innovation and protect public health. The country's law says it is not possible to patent "the mere discovery of a new form of a known substance which does not result in the enhancement of the known efficacy of that substance".

Bishop Yvon Ambroise, of the commission for justice and peace of the Catholic Bishop's Conference of India said: "How can Novartis justify asking for the right to patent changes to a medicine that bring no new benefit? We support practices that encourage and reward real innovation and progress in improving the health of people in need. We condemn practices that trivialize innovation for the sake of maximizing corporate profits."

Czech bishops fear aggressive collaboration claims are misused

By Jonathan Luxmoore

Warsaw (ENI)–The Roman Catholic Church in the Czech Republic "says media aggressiveness" can be misused when used against clergy suspected of collaborating under communist rule, after several bishops were accused of links with the former secret police.

"Every bishop faced persecution from the communist rulers, and several of today's church leaders paid for their faithfulness with imprisonment," the Czech Bishops Conference said in a statement. "The Catholic Church was particularly mistreated and virtually all dioceses deprived of pastors," said the bishops. "We demand that communist secret service material is not used to settle personal accounts, destroy inter-human relations and vilify particular social groups."

Their statement followed claims made in the media about clergy collaboration with the Statni Bezpecnosti secret police, or StB, under communist rule, which lasted for 42 years till the 1989 Velvet Revolution.

The bishops said the Catholic Church, which makes up 27 percent of the country's 10.5 million inhabitants, began examining its past in 1991 when a law was enacted for screening former agents, and it had since vetted its clergy more systematically than any other social group.

"While some priests were constrained to collaborate, it's also striking that society tolerates the fact that the inheritors of the persecution era are sitting in parliament as Communist Party members right up to today without any scruple or objection from the public," the bishops noted.

"When a priest does not know how his name ended up in StB material, and when the documentation shows he didn't sign anything or inform on anyone, no one should condemn him. We urge media representatives to avoid aggressiveness and seek the full truth, respecting each person's dignity and right to a good name."

Around one in 10 Catholic priests are believed to have acted as informers in the Czech Republic, where church rights were tightly restricted throughout the communist period, although several currently serving bishops were also imprisoned for defending human rights.

The general secretary of the Czech Ecumenical Council, Jitka Krausova, told Ecumenical News International that recent media claims had only affected the Catholic Church and she had not heard of similar allegations against the council's 11 minority member-churches.

"Most non-Catholic churches dealt with this issue in the 1990s, asking anyone whose name appeared on agent lists to step aside from church leadership," Krausova, a member of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, told ENI.

"There seems to be a general feeling that churches are part of society and thus legitimate objects of media attention. Since the Roman Catholic Church is the biggest here, it's also the biggest target."

Church

Islam challenges European view that religion is private

By Stephen Brown

Wittenberg, Germany (ENI) – The growth of Islam in Europe is challenging deeply-held notions that faith is a private matter which should be banished from public life, a prominent sociologist of religion has told a gathering of European Christian leaders.

"We ignore the presence of Islam at our peril," Professor Grace Davie of the University of Exeter in Britain told leaders from Europe's main Christian traditions at a February 15-18 meeting in Wittenberg in Germany. "This is a catalyst for a much more profound change in the religious landscape of Europe."

Recent controversies such as those about the wearing of the Muslim headscarf by school students in France, or the publication of cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad in Danish newspapers, were cases in point, noted Davie, professor of sociology at Exeter university and director of its centre for European studies.

"The presence of Islam is a catalyst that has reopened issues that Europeans thought were closed," Davie said. "You cannot privatize Islam. We have seen that." But she said Christian churches had a major task in helping to find ways to deal with such public expression of religion.

Davie was presenting the results of recent research* on the place of religion in Europe, in which she wrote about the controversy over the cartoons: "The lack of comprehension on both sides of this affair, together with an unwillingness to compromise, led alarmingly fast to dangerous confrontations, both in Europe and beyond."

The notion that religion should be banished from public life – and particularly from the state and from the education system – was widespread in Europe, Davie noted. But in part due to the presence of Islam, religion was increasingly likely to penetrate the public sphere in Europe, a tendency being encouraged by the ever more obvious presence of religion in the modern global order.

However, this was "probably more of a problem for the secular elite than the Christian churches," Davie suggested in her comments in Wittenberg. She said, "We need to grasp how to deal with religion in the political sphere and here Christian churches have a huge contribution to make."

The Wittenberg meeting is being organized by the Council of European (Roman Catholic) Bishops' Conferences (CCEE) and the Conference of European Churches (CEC), which groups most Anglican, Protestant and Orthodox churches in Europe.

It is one of a series of events that will culminate in September in the Romanian city of Sibiu at the Third European Ecumenical Assembly, which will gather several thousand people from Europe's main Christian traditions.

**Grace Davie, "Is Europe an Exceptional Case?" in* The Hedgehog Review, *Spring/Summer 2006 issue, Web site:* www.virginia.edu/iasc/hedgehog.html

The advance of Hindu nationalism in India

Elizabeth Kendall

While India's Hindutva (Hindu nationalist) forces suffered a shock-loss in the 2004 federal elections, the Hindutva sharks are alive and well and extremely active just below the surface, generating more and more heat and momentum as they gather the masses into their Hindutva stream. Meanwhile the skaters – the secular liberal progressives presently in power – seem unaware or unconcerned that the ice is melting and eroding beneath their feet.

India has a population of some 1.2 billion. There are more than 25 million Christians and an active, sacrificial and growing Indian cross-cultural missionary movement.

The Hindutva forces worked solidly through 2006. Their plan doubtless is to consolidate their gains and advance further through 2007. They are clearly in the midst of a four-year re-election campaign.

Caste as social order, not Hinduism as a religious philosophy, is the greatest bulwark and challenge to religious liberty and Christianity in India. Without a supernatural work of divine grace in the heart, Hindus can only be appalled and threatened by the biblical concept that all men and women are created equal. This is particularly true of the higher castes, those privileged elite who profit most from the caste system and are the real influencers and power-brokers of India.

Equality is always welcomed by those who are so to speak "below the bar": those who will benefit from being elevated and liberated such as the poor and persecuted. Those "above the bar", for whom equality means leveling and some degree of sacrifice, are generally less enthusiastic. Hindus are not the only people guilty of this selfishness. Christians can be good at tolerating the injustices they benefit from too! With Christians this is an issue of sin. In a Hindu society however, caste is systemic, deeply ingrained in the Hindu psyche and embedded in Hinduism's fatalistic religious philosophy.

The leaders and ideologues behind the Hindutva forces are not driven primarily by a commitment to religious (Hindu) dogma. They are primarily driven by their desire to secure for themselves the privileges of power and caste.

After losing central power in 2004 the Hindutva forces spent much of 2005 bickering, blaming and jockeying as well as analysing the situation and debating policy. Then in early 2006 the Hindutva strategy for re-election emerged for all to see through the Shabri Kumbh Mela in Dangs, Gujarat.

The Hindutva forces are aiming for re-election in 2009, preferably with a majority so they can change the constitution and establish their fascist Hindu state.

The Hindutva strategy is as outlined in that posting:

1) Hinduise the animists, effecting religious conversions for political gain;

2) create new exploitable mythology and tradition for political gain;

3) create for political gain a climate of fear and anger intense enough to motivate all "Hindus" to unite against a perceived threat to their security,.

The Hindutva forces portray Christians as a threat to India's unity, social harmony and national security. In Hindutva-produced DVDs, videos, tracts, books and speeches Christians are described as terrorists, separatists and subversive or unwitting agents of Western imperialistic forces that seek to divide and weaken India in preparation for conquest. Because of this, persecution against Christians has dramatically escalated in frequency, severity and geographical scope.

Christians are no longer being attacked only by Hindutva forces and militants, they are now also being attacked by their Hinduised neighbors while police stand idly by, watching and waiting for the chaos to settle so they can arrest and charge the victims. What's more, this persecution is no longer mostly limited to BJP-led (Hindutva) states. Violent and legislative persecution of Christians is escalating in all states across the nation.

Because the Hindutva forces are active primarily in the religious sphere – Hinduising the animist tribals and creating new exploitable Hindu mythology – their activity is slipping under the radar of most political analysts. But while the Hindutva forces are focusing on the religious sphere it is all for political gain. This strategy of effecting political conversion by means of religious conversion is hugely successful. It is, however, built on lies, deceit and manipulation. Furthermore Hindutva will not produce the harmony and security it promises – only repression, persecution and communal conflict. Instead of growing prosperity and international engagement, a Hindutva India would face destructive turmoil and crippling sanctions.

National and international campaigns are urgently needed to combat the Hindutva deception and propaganda and promote religious liberty in India. If the Hindutva forces are permitted to continue in their highly strategic, deceptive and unchallenged advance, then they will regain federal power in the 2009 election, change the constitution and establish a fascist Hindu state where religious repression and persecution will be equal to the world's worst.

US church given deadline to say no to gay bishops

Fredrick Nzwili

Nairobi (ENI) – Anglican leaders from around the world have said the US Episcopal (Anglican) Church must declare unequivocally it will not authorize same-sex blessings and that no one living in a same-sex union will be made a bishop.

Failure to give such assurances by September 30 would have "consequences for the full participation of the [US] church in the life of the [Anglican] Communion", the church leaders, known as primates, said in a statement issued at the end of a February 15-19 meeting in Tanzania's commercial capital of Dar es Salaam.

The stand-off was triggered in 2003 after the US church consecrated V. Gene Robinson, an openly gay divorced father, as a bishop in New Hampshire. Many Anglican leaders from Africa, Asia and Latin America are opposed to the views of what they say is a minority from the West who are more tolerant of homosexuality in the Church.

"At the heart of our tensions is the belief that The Episcopal Church has departed from the standard of teaching on human sexuality," stated the primates, coming from most of the 38 provinces of the worldwide Anglican Communion. "The episcopal ministry of a person living in a same-sex relationship is not acceptable to the majority of the Communion."

The presiding bishop of the US church, the Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori, who is one of the 38 primates, said the gathering had demonstrated "a positive sense of collegiality, especially in the Bible studies and among provinces where these issues have been robustly discussed."

Earlier in the meeting, seven archbishops from the Southern Hemisphere refused to receive Holy Communion with their fellow Anglican leaders, saying they were "unable to come to the Holy Table with the presiding bishop of The Episcopal Church because to do so would be a violation of Scriptural teaching."

On February 18, the church leaders travelled by boat to Zanzibar for a service in the Anglican Cathedral, where the altar stands over an old slave trading post. They were joining the people of the island in commemorating the 100th anniversary of the last slave sold there and the 200th anniversary of the end of the slave trade in the then British empire.

"Today we remember the abolition of the slave trade," the Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, the leader of the Anglican Communion, said in his sermon. And that reminds us that for hundreds and hundreds of years – in fact for thousands of years – people did not see the evil of slavery."

Williams continued, "And so one thing which we might reflect upon today is what it is that we now are blind to; who is it now whose suffering we cannot see, cannot understand."

Mexico

Wealth gap tests Mexico's new President Calderón

Sara Miller Llana

SAN ISIDRO VISTA HERMOSA, MEXICO – This small community of 500 sits four miles up a mountain's steep back road, its dirt-floor homes sprawled across rocky fields in the northern highlands of Oaxaca state.

There is neither a health clinic nor high school here, and families are fragmented as nearly all the young men, and many women, head to the US to work as dishwashers or construction workers for years at a time. The only modern homes, simple cement blocks, are built with the money they send back.

For most residents in towns like these in Mexico's impoverished south, the opportunities of a more prosperous north and a Mexico City flush with luxury cars and mansions are out of reach. In a country with more billionaires than Switzerland, according to *Forbes* magazine, most Oaxacans live on the opposite side of the nation's stubborn rich-poor gap.

This summer residents across the region joined an annual teachers strike in the state capital, which erupted into a massive social movement of fierce protests that paralyzed the city for months.

To stem a growing restlessness among the nation's poor – almost half of the population – Mexico's new president Felipe Calderón faces the delicate balance of tackling poverty's roots while also addressing its symptoms. He has moved quickly to promise aid for some of the most fundamental problems facing the poor, targeting everything from drinkable water to health services and schools. But Mr. Calderón has made it equally clear that none of that will matter unless social order is maintained, showing a firm hand that some have interpreted to mean disruptive protests will no longer be tolerated.

"This is Calderón's big dilemma," says Luis Felipe Lopez-Calva, who is to be the United Nations' new chief economist for Latin America and the Caribbean. "If he doesn't do something to undermine the objective of social dissent, he may feel tempted to use force. There is the risk of him gaining legitimacy through the use of force against social dissent, instead of attacking the causes of what is really going on."

Calderón's 'tough hand'

Nowhere is the balancing act tougher than in Oaxaca, which voted heavily for leftist candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador, who barely lost this summer's disputed election. It's one of the poorest states in Mexico, and home of the most contentious protests this year, when the annual teachers strike in the capital led to a reported dozen deaths and ultimately the deployment of federal police.

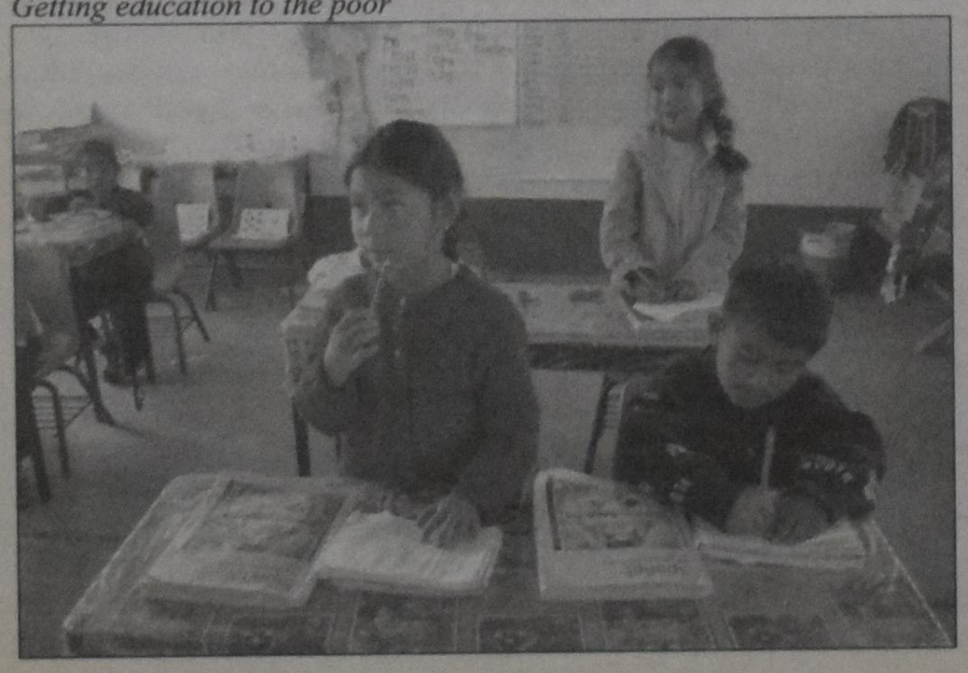
The protests were fueled by a demand to oust the state governor, who, opponents claim, was elected fraudulently and has used repressive tactics to stifle dissent. But for many, it was a demand for equality and social justice, too.

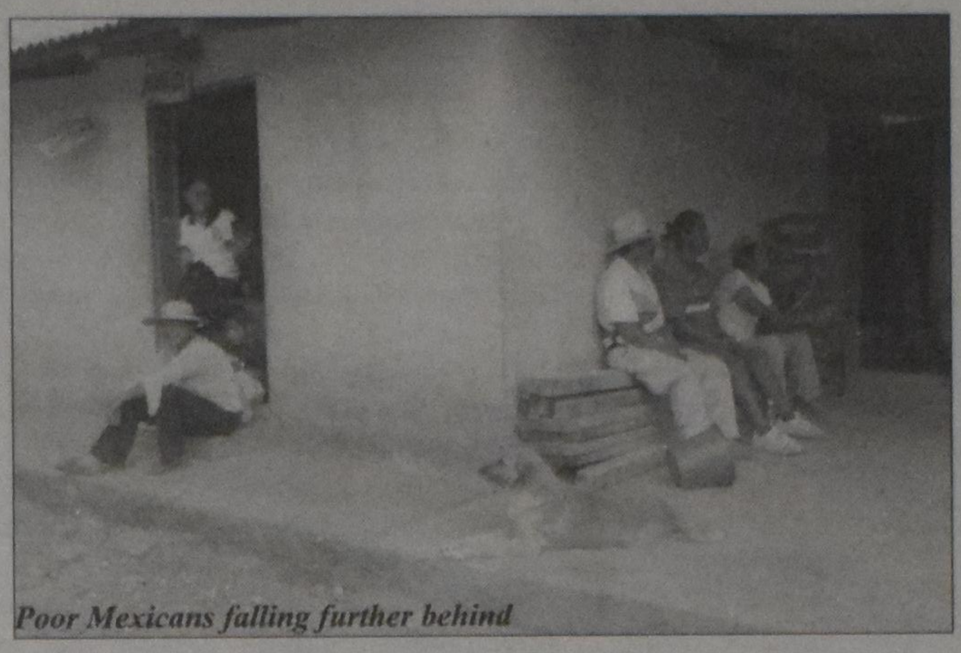
One of Calderón's first moves after taking office as the "law and order" president was to sanction the arrest of the Oaxaca protest movement's leader, Flavio Sosa. It has proved to be controversial in the region.

Experts caution that while Calderón's efforts to bring order to Mexico, including a major military operation against drug traffickers, has won him public support, he runs the risk of alienating foes. A phrase being repeated in Oaxaca, with disdain, is mano dura, or "tough hand."

Aside from promptly arresting Mr. Sosa, Calderón named former governor of Jalisco state Francisco Ramirez Acuña – widely considered to be a hard-liner – to head the Interior Ministry. Analysts say the move sent a clear signal that he intends to take a tougher approach to dealing with potentially violent protests.

Getting education to the poor





Poor Mexicans falling further behind

"Appointing [Acuña] sends a strong message about where he wants to go," says Rolando Gonzalez, coordinator for The Center for Human Rights in Tlaxiaco. Mr. Gonzalez says another plan by Calderón, to unify autonomous forces into one federal police unit, will intensify an atmosphere of repression. "More than addressing the profound changes that the country needs, Calderón is finding a way to shut us up, to dissolve the protests."

New leader forced to tackle poverty

Throughout his campaign, Calderón touted himself as "the jobs president," but in the wake of a contested election, the closest in the nation's history, he quickly switched his message, saying he was going to "rebasar por la izquierda," or overtake on the left, leaving many to anticipate that he would quickly move to adopt some of López Obrador's social programs.

In many ways, he has no other choice. López Obrador supporters camped out for seven weeks along a major thoroughfare in Mexico City while the nation's electoral court decided who would be the next president, and when it chose Calderón, tens of thousands of Mexicans declared López Obrador the real president.

"I think he's very aware that the circumstances that allowed López Obrador to come within a whisker of winning are all still there," says Gabriel Guerra Castellanos, a political analyst. "If he wants to have a fighting chance at a successful presidency, he has to tackle those issues. It's not one of those compassionate-conservative kinds of things; it's very pragmatic."

The president's antipoverty plans

Days after taking office, Calderón announced he would slash his salary, and those of his top officials, by 10 percent – one of López Obrador's longstanding pledges – and put the savings toward social programs. The austerity plan, which will save an estimated $2.3 billion a year, will be put toward more scholarships for students and health services.

The president's first trip outside Mexico City was to one of the poorest towns in the state of Guerrero, where he announced a program to invest in the nation's 100 poorest municipalities in order to provide potable water, new drainage systems, and more school funding – and to help bridge the divide between rich and poor. Calderón announced in Guerrero a plan to launch 2,500 projects to improve housing, paid for with $3 million in federal money and $1 million in state funds. Generating employment through infrastructure projects was another López Obrador pledge.

Calderón later announced he will bring caravan medical clinics to isolated towns, which expands on former President Vicente Fox's insurance policy for the uninsured, Seguro Popular. Calderón has also launched a national health-insurance plan for all infants born during his administration. While it has been both hailed and criticized for being aggressive and propagandistic, at its heart the program is also an expansion of Seguro Popular. In announcing the program, Calderón said he hoped to cover an additional 1.7 million uninsured Mexican families this year.

Calderón 'better positioned' than Fox

Calderón has been part of the political party his father founded in the 1930s for his entire life. A devout Roman Catholic, he lacks the charisma of Fox but, says de la Torre, is a "vertical thinker" who cares less about abstract reasons behind poverty than about results. Others agree. "I think he is better positioned and better qualified than Fox to tackle the social and political issues surrounding poverty," says Mr. Guerra Castellanos. "Because, at the end of the day, it's not just about social programs – it's having the guts to stand up to powerful unions, having the guts to stand up to local party bosses, and the savvy to outsmart them."

Failure to lift all boats

According to the National Council on the Evaluation of Politics of Social Development, poverty decreased from 54 percent in 2000 to 47 percent of the population in 2005, but Guerra Castellanos says that Mexico has failed to integrate a huge portion of its residents into the workforce and give them hope that their kids will be able to go to college and move up. "You have managed to bring communities and people out of the swamps; however, the lower middle class, as a sector, is stuck, and it's getting bigger all the time," he says.

Mexico's economic crises, especially in the '90s, weighed on its ability to create jobs and spur growth. Many analysts say that the North American Free Trade Agreement, too, while benefiting the north as factory growth and foreign investment boomed, decimated many small farmers in the south, exacerbating "the two Mexicos."

Raising goats

Felipe Avila Leon, a farmer from San Isidro Vista Hermosa, doesn't own much and says he never will. Most of what his family eats is grown on a 3-1/2-acre patch of land an hour's trek down the back side of a mountain. When they need soap or school supplies, they sell a goat at the local market for about $20.

None of the family's nine children have gone to high school because they can't afford the ride to Tlaxiaco, where both the high school and nearest health clinic are located. Their floor is made of dirt; their bathroom is an outhouse in the middle of a field.

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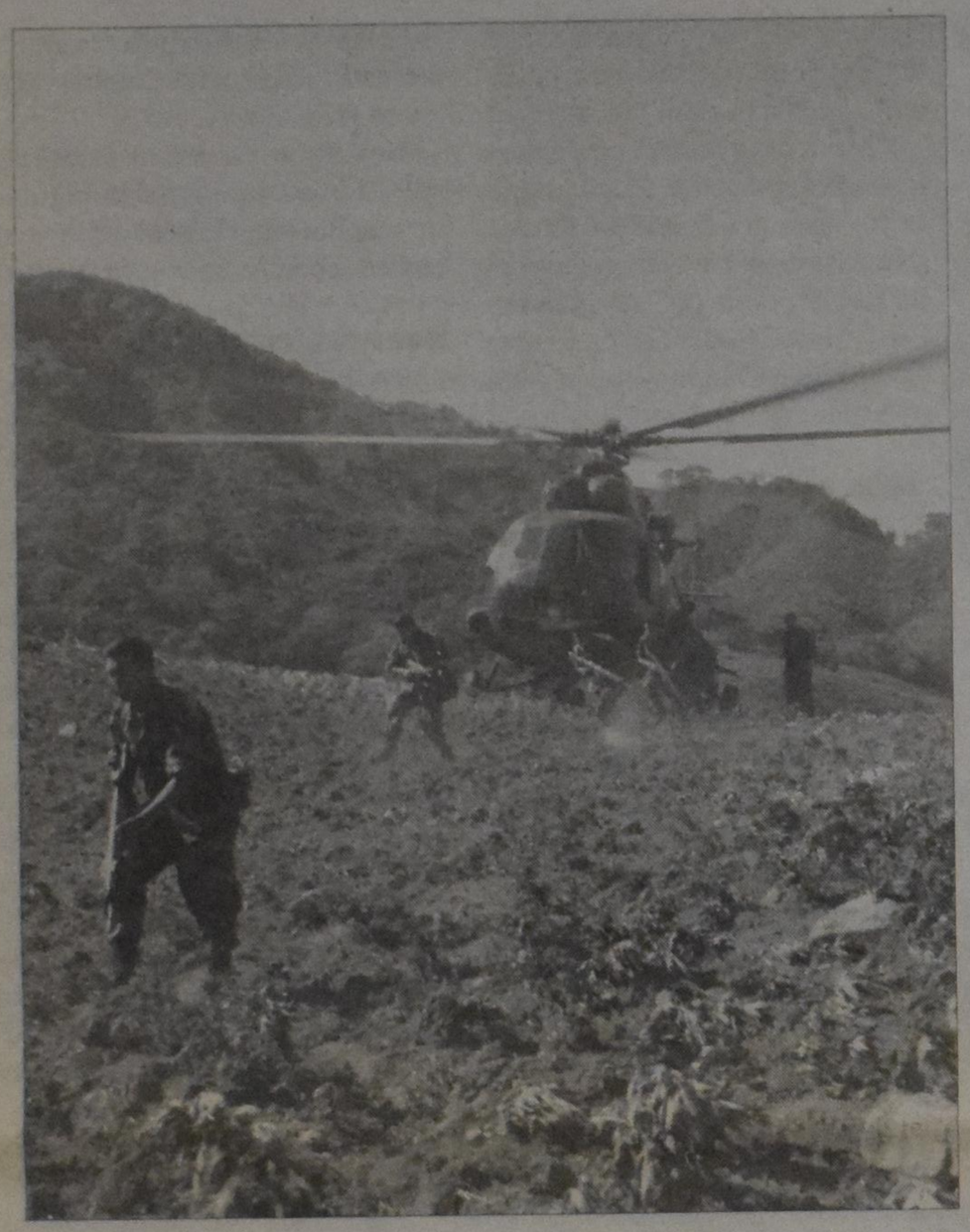
Mexico

Mexico's president is tackling the country's mighty drug cartels



Sara Miller Llana

LAZARO CARDENAS, MEXICO – They leapt off the helicopters in seconds: 35 Mexican soldiers, touching down softly on the soil and fanning out across a marijuana field.

As the men yanked out tidy rows of plants perched on a mountainside in the western state of Michoacán, other military choppers circled like hawks, ready to battle hiding snipers. Two hours later, the only hint of a narcotrafficking base was a smoldering fire.

It's a scene familiar in Colombia, but new here in Mexico. This small victory is part of President Felipe Calderón's massive military effort to crack down on one of Mexico's most entrenched problems: drug trafficking and organized crime. But as most of the helicopters pulled away, the sight of soldiers pulling up remaining plants one by one in this tiny field – one of 38 in this isolated region alone – underscored the enormity of targeting Mexico's vast illicit drug trade, which includes poppy fields, meth labs, and cash-flush criminals who control entire communities.

An escalating scourge

The number of drug cartel-related murders topped 2,100 last year, nearly double the average over the previous five years, and the problem is spilling over the border with the US, which asserts that 90 percent of drugs coming from Latin America enter through Mexico.

The more than 17,000 federal troops and police Calderón has deployed to the drug war's front lines so far are the stars of his mission to show that he's in control of the escalating scourge. He's lavished praise on soldiers – at one point even donning military fatigues to thank them. But it's not Calderón's willingness to deploy so many troops in a country wary of the military playing too prominent a public role that will determine success, say analysts. Real results, they say, depend on whether he can maintain a focus on the tougher, less visible fight to simultaneously root out corruption in local police forces and improve the court system.

"He is making decisions. But if you don't make reforms at all levels at the same time, it won't work," says Jorge Chabat, a drugs expert at Mexico City's Center for Economic Research and Teaching. "You can be very efficient capturing one criminal, and then he goes free because some judge was given some money. Or maybe you can capture the criminal, the judiciary works well, and then a drug lord escapes from a high security prison."

While the number of cartel-related murders across Mexico has increased from about 1,000 in 2001 to more than 2,100 last year, according to government figures, so, too, has the ferocity of the killings. Human heads were propped on a fence outside a government building in Acapulco. A mass grave was found. In the most gruesome incident, gunmen in September stormed a nightclub and hurled five heads onto a dance club in Uruapan, Michoacán.

Most of the bloodshed has been restricted to cartels, but police and journalists have also been targeted, and feuds have migrated from Mexico's northern border with the US to the entire Pacific corridor, as the dominating Gulf and Sinaloa cartels – as well as their subsidiaries – battle for billion-dollar routes and territory.

Time to send in the troops

Days after taking office December 1, Calderón announced Operation Michoacán by sending 7,000 military and federal officers into his home state. "This is a very difficult battle,"said Army Gen. Manuel García Ruiz, who heads Operation Michoacán. "It will last as long as it is necessary."

Last month, a small group of journalists was invited to witness the raid in Michoacán, where choppers flew over mountains, cut with rocky ravines snaking through sparsely populated valleys. The marijuana field on which they landed was ringed with an irrigation system fed by a rushing creek and thousands of yards of tubing. Footpaths led to at least two other such fields and a recently abandoned shack, with half-eaten tamales littering wooden benches.

Authorities in Operation Michoacán have arrested dozens of people, including suspected drug lords. They have seized firearms, bulletproof vests, antennas, and telephones, and destroyed more than a thousand acres of marijuana fields. The goal, says General García Ruiz, is to disrupt both the cartels' economic means and modes of communication.

The US has, thus far, voiced optimism. "We certainly are supporting [Calderón's] moves to try to do something about the issues of drug trafficking; not only does it affect his country but it affects the US as well," says Christy McCampbell, the deputy assistant secretary in the US State Department's Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs.

Calderón breaks from past

Yet outgoing President Vicente Fox also declared the "mother of all battles" against drug cartels, and made high-profile arrests of suspected gang leaders. In 2005, he launched Secure Mexico, in which federal police fanned into border cities and later hot spots like Acapulco. But violence escalated under his watch.

Unlike Mr. Fox, who used the military only in support roles, Calderón has made them the centerpiece of the effort – in part to control organized crime that has tainted many local police forces. Other leaders have, in general, been loath to use the military, which many attribute to the fallout from a 1968 student protest in Tlatelolco, Mexico City, in which the Army was sent to quell dissent and then fired on the crowd.

"Mexican society is still in the midst of transitioning from looking at the use of force as political oppression versus seeing it as enforcement of the rule of law," says Mr. Peschard-Sverdrup, director of the Mexico Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. "I think Calderón sees that ... using force for the sake of enforcing the rule of law can actually strengthen Mexican democracy."

Unprecedented role

But many caution against embracing the military's new role. "This is really unprecedented.... What distinguishes Mexico from

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Wealth gap *...continued from p.10*

"I'm happy working in the countryside," he says on a recent day as he herds his 50 goats and a few sheep. "But I don't want my children to live in the same situation."

His wife, Hermalinta Leon Victoria, says she receives about 350 pesos (about $32) a month from Oportunidades since she has two young teens in school. Oportunidades is a program inherited from the previous government, under which 5 million families receive stipends if their children remain in school. It helps, she says, but she adds that they are just as poor as they were six years ago when they began receiving the stipend. Like the rest of her children, her two youngest probably won't be able to go to high school.

Currently most families receive about a dollar a day for participating in Oportunidades, says Julio Boltvinik, a poverty expert at the College of Mexico. "This does not bring anyone out of poverty. It does not bring real change."

Victor Manuel Alejo, a sociology teacher in Tlaxiaco, participated in the Oaxaca conflict, and says that while it was a local issue at heart, it symbolizes a much larger problem.

"It's not just [the political situation] in Oaxaca, it's something much bigger," he says. He says he is prepared to protest if Calderón privatizes state-run industries such as oil, raises taxes, or violates human rights with military force. "Now bigger problems are coming."

That's why López-Calva says Calderón must quickly show his commitment to fighting poverty. "You have to move fast, or there will be a backlash against democratic institutions that aren't delivering fast enough," he says.

Eduardo Leon herds his grandfather's goats

Mexico

Can Calderón loosen the grip of the monopolies

Sara Miller Llana

MEXICO CITY– Mexicans run into near-monopolies at every turn. When they pick up a phone (to be charged rates above the international average), it's almost certain that the service provider is Telmex, which owns 94 percent of landlines. When they turn on the TV at night, they're probably viewing a channel owned by one of two dominant broadcasters.

Usually, they just sigh.

But last month, the price of corn tortillas, dominated by a company owning 70 percent of the tortilla and cornmeal market, shot up by more than 50 percent in some parts of the country. That sent the war against price gouging, usually reserved to regulatory agency meetings, pouring into the streets – with housewives marching to demand an answer.

The unrest was enough to spur the nation's antitrust watchdog to launch an investigation, threatening fines of up to $6.4 million on any company engaged in monopolistic practices.

For President Felipe Calderón, though, the "tortilla wars" could ultimately portend something much larger. He campaigned as the "jobs president," but if history is to grant him that title, he faces tough economic reforms ahead. Economists say loosening the tight grip that business elites have on the economy should be near the top of the list for a country that is losing position globally – in no small part because of the economic concentration that keeps competition down and prices high.

The price of tortillas has skyrocketed

"Monopolies are one of the top three reasons that Mexico is not growing faster," says Luis Felipe Lopez-Calva, who is joining the UN as the chief economist for Latin America and the Caribbean. He's one author of a recent World Bank study showing that Mexican oligopolies such as Telmex, public monopolies such as oil company Pemex, and the nation's powerful public-sector unions hurt competitiveness and exacerbate the divide between rich and poor. Under the administration of former president Vicente Fox, it showed, billionaires got richer – their net worth growing steadily in recent years to 6 percent of GDP in 2006 – while nearly half of Mexico's 106 million residents continued to live in poverty.

Average joes feel the pinch

"This is a country of pure extortion," says Victor Manuel Martinez, a locksmith and father of two, who laments the high costs he pays for telephone service and electricity in the simple shop he set up on a Mexico City sidewalk.

In Mexico, electricity is dominated by a state-controlled monopoly, and Mexicans pay some of the highest rates in the world, according to the World Bank study.

Carlos Slim, the world's third-richest man behind Bill Gates and Warren Buffett according to *Forbes* magazine, owns 94 percent of landlines with his company Telmex, and over 70 percent of the mobile phone industry. "I only use it for emergencies or work," says Martinez, pulling his phone out of his jeans pocket only to tell a passerby the time.

"Mexico is a country of privilege. Instead of competing for consumers to buy their goods or their services [big businesses] are always looking for special privileges," says Eduardo Perez Motta, who heads the Federal Competition Commission, the country's antitrust regulator.

'Jobs president'

With his master's degree in economics and a lifetime in politics, few people know which economic reforms Mexico needs better than the man who campaigned as the "jobs president," Calderón's friends say. Tax collection rates are among the lowest in Latin America. Labor laws make it hard to fire inefficient employees. Corruption and bureaucracy dissuade investment.

It was Calderón's rival for the presidential slot, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, who threatened the nation's leviathans, many of whom were Calderón's most loyal supporters. But because the cliffhanger race highlighted the income divide so starkly, says Mr. Perez Motta, Calderón may have no choice but to try to disband the stubborn concentration of wealth if he wants to meet his campaign pledge and prove that he is not beholden to vested interests.

"It's not a matter of whether he goes after certain sectors and how aggressive he is toward breaking up these oligopolies. It's a matter of how and when,"says Armand Peschard-Sverdrup, director of the Mexico Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

When pressed on the issue of monopolies, Calderon said: "I am convinced that competition benefits consumers and makes economies more efficient. It seems to me that public and private monopolies don't respond, necessarily, to a new world context, in which the interaction of consumers and products generate much bigger markets."

The economy

Calderón recently announced a jobs creation program for young Mexicans, including cash incentives to companies that hire first-time workers.

"While other governments in the world and Latin America are thinking about expropriating or seizing your investments," he told foreign firms, "in Mexico we are thinking about how to give guarantees to increase investment in our country." He also promised infrastructure projects to attract investments and speed growth.

But the pressure to break up monopolies looms, and regulatory agencies, industry players, and economists have a wish list.

Roots of 'crony capitalism'

The roots of oligopolies in Mexico date back to the 1930s and '40s, when local governments created state-run industries to reduce independence on goods from foreign countries, says Celso Garrido, an economist at Mexico City's Autonomous Metropolitan University. The Institutional Revolutionary Party, which controlled Mexico for 71 years, also controlled key industries.

When the country was forced to open up to privatization after the financial crises of the '80s and '90s, industries were not open to competition, but merely transferred to private ownership. In 1990, for example, a consortium headed by Mr. Slim bought the state-run telephone company.

But it's the public energy monopolies – especially the state-run oil firm Pemex – and oligarchies in the banking sector are among the most worrying to economists.

Oligopolies play a critical role in slowing growth in Mexico, which, compared to countries with similar development in the region, has one of the most entrenched concentrations, says Lopez-Calva. He attributes that to weaker regulatory institutions and a less independent judiciary.

Some, like Mr. Martinez, doubt that Calderón, a free-market advocate and friend of big business, will have the gumption to attack the country's economic elites.

But many pin hopes on Calderón, who is known for taking copious notes and studying them before heading into meetings, and seeking quick results.

Last month, Calderón signed an agreement with businesses to limit tortilla prices to 78 cents a kilogram and raised duty-free corn imports. The government has been seeking a culprit, blaming the price hike on everything from US demand for corn for its ethanol plants to price-gouging middlemen. But Calderón made sure to get in a plug for the nation's competition crusaders, saying: "We won't tolerate speculators or monopolists."

• *Ms. Llana is Latin America correspondent for the* Monitor and USA Today.

Drug Cartels ... *continued*

other Latin American countries is precisely the limited political role of the military. We have never had a coup in Mexico because of this," says John Ackerman, a legal expert at the National Autonomous University of Mexico.

Others are concerned that the highly regarded military will become corrupt – just as the police force and local governments have – while combating drug cartels. "I agree that the Army may be corrupted in the fight against drug trafficking ... but what option do you have?" says Chabat.

Tackling corruption is key

Mr. Ackerman says that displays of force are less important than combating the corruption that pervades so many levels of society. He just worked on the Mexico evaluation for the 2006 Global Integrity Report, which gave judicial accountability, law enforcement, and rule of law the lowest rankings.

Calderón has promised to root out corruption, particularly among the local police. Calderón has also voiced support of an overhaul to the legal and penal systems, cleaning up legal codes and stiffening criminal sentences, and moving toward oral trials to bring more transparency to the judiciary, says Ackerman. Currently, almost all trials are written, making them more secretive and vulnerable to corruption.

José Antonio Ortega, the head of the Citizen's Council for Public Security and Criminal Justice in Mexico City, says he has faith that Calderón will be more adept at tackling organized crime than Fox. "President Fox did not recognize the magnitude of the problem," he says. Instead, Mr. Ortega says, he touted arrests made but denied that the problem had spiraled out of control. Calderón, on the other hand, has told troops to prepare for a long fight.

"[Calderón] understands that if he doesn't tackle security, everything else becomes moot," says Andrés Rozental, Mexico's former deputy foreign minister from 1988-94.

Michael Shifter, vice president of policy at the Inter-American Dialogue, points out parallels between Calderón's efforts and those of Colombia's President Álvaro Uribe, who has received more than $7 billion from the US in recent years for his country's war on drug trafficking. "Uribe tapped into a real sentiment that was widely held in Colombia, where insecurity had just become intolerable for people," Mr. Shifter says. "Somebody had to take charge. Calderón senses the same thing in Mexico in 2007."

Calderón has already started trumpeting security improvements. "Today Mexico has more peace and certainty than at the beginning of my term, and that fills me with satisfaction," he said recently at a press conference.

Winter

Snow culture and hoowah!

Harry der Nederlanden

Snow storms bring out the best in people. At least they do so in me. With snow plastered high against our doors and the snow still coming down in great swirling sheets, I could hardly contain my eagerness to get outdoors to brave the elements. The word "brave" is crucial here. One of the few remaining ways for us he-men to demonstrate our mettle is to venture out in snowstorms. Only two days earlier I had spent over two hours in the woods, braving frigid temperatures and deep snow to make my way up a long ravine and stand at the foot of a towering frozen waterfall just to beat my manly chest and shout, Hoowah! Hoowah!

We have a very long driveway, and when I got outside, I saw that the wind had sculpted a long wave – a snow-mohawk – right down the center of our driveway. Yes, a good morning to walk to work. Hoowah!

After plowing through knee-deep snow to the road, however, I turned around. My boots were filling with snow. Booha! But I had a clever idea. In my dresser drawer were some old socks with holes in the heels. Quickly I cut off the feet, pulled them up over my socks and then rolled them down over my shoes. It is such clever improvisations that prove man's superiority to monkeys.

Fortunately, a couple of neighbors with four-wheel-drive vehicles had made twin tracks through the deep snow on our street, making walking a little easier. Not that it was like walking on a cleared sidewalk, mind you. It still took unusual pluck – and balance – to be out there in the whooping blizzard. Hoowah!

There were other dangers besides the cold and snow in your boots, however. Some other members of the male gender, excited by the deep snow, were proving their manhood by tearing up and down unplowed streets in their four-wheel-drive vehicles to bust through high snowdrifts. With my hood up and snow whipping against it, I didn't always hear them coming up behind me, so I had to be extremely nimble of foot. A couple of times I narrowly avoided being sideswiped by pickups fishtailing down the road. As they roared by in a cloud of snow, I distinctly heard the drivers shouting Hoowah!

Picking myself up out of the ditch, I hollered more than Hoowah!

Before I knew what was happening, the snow turned into a torrent, almost knocking me down again. It wasn't to be my last encounter with a snowblower. The fellow manning it was clad in a bright yellow snowsuit. Only his red cheeks and his wild eyes still showed. Again and again I had to scramble to dodge blasts of snow from the roaring machines. All the macho men who weren't out in four-wheel-drive vehicles were pushing around monstrous snowblowers. Entire neighborhoods of men with high testosterone levels were outside doing battle with the elements – and one another – as huge swaths of snow hurled from one driveway to another.

There were still a few people out doing snow removal the old fashioned way – with a shovel. Almost to a man they were all women. The men, it seems, have discovered the principle of "sustainability" – they've learned that it's easier to let the wife do the digging rather than sustain serious back injury.

I stopped to chat with a couple of the women. You couldn't chat with the men, of course, not over the roar of their super-sized snowblowers. All you could do is wave your hand in surrender as they buried you in a manmade drift.

(A couple of the women further deepened my education on the difference between genders in their

response to snowstorms, particularly snowstorms on Valentine's Day.

Boys: "Whooppee! No school today! Where's my snowsuit? I'm going outside to build a snow fort!"

Girls: "No school today? Whaaa! Now we won't be able to exchange valentines!")

When it comes to snow removal, pedestrians are definitely second-class citizens. Snow removal means push the snow from the paths taken by cars and pile it high across the paths taken by pedestrians. Service stations, car lots and auto servicing places like Speedy and Midas are especially guilty. I suspect that they instruct their snow removal people to build impassable walls across the sidewalks. They are out to intimidate and perhaps eliminate non-drivers.

(Oh, another snowstorm survival tip: if you carry a book in your pocket, make sure the flap is closed; otherwise, you'll be digging your book out of a mini-snowdrift in your pocket.)

Tired of slogging through deep snow on the side roads, I tried one of the main thoroughfares. It was well-plowed, which meant that the sidewalks were piled deep under snow from the roadway. After less than half a block, I decided to take my chances with the cars and walked on the road. There's nothing more horrifying, however, to see a snowplow coming straight at you, throwing up a plume of snow 10 to 12 feet high and suddenly realizing that the driver has as little respect for pedestrians as the guys in pickups. Hoowaaah!

It's not only men who get a bit demented by snowstorms. Dogs do too. Perhaps, all plastered with snow by snowblowers and snowplows, I looked a little like a walking doggy bone. Whatever the reason, on a couple of occasions, overly exuberant dogs attempted to bury me in the nearest snowbank. In every neighborhood there were packs of unleashed dogs tearing about. When the snows begin to swirl, Canadians seem to lose all respect for law and order. They throw the door open wide and cry, "Let loose the dogs of hoowar!"

Perhaps that's why we're a relatively phlegmatic people. Our lawless Dionysian impulses are loosed to the winter winds during our snowstorms and carried off into the vast reaches of the arctic.

Halfway to the office, I stopped at Fairview Mall to get a cup of coffee at Starbucks. Although there were no more than a half dozen shoppers in the mall, store clerks had risked life and limb to get to work in time to open the stores. Only a couple were still closed. You wonder about the rationality of that imperative: no matter if the shoppers are all snowed in, the stores must be open on time.

I asked a couple of clerks who were dragging tables into the mall whether they were having a blizzard sale. They gave me a rather disgruntled look.

"Why not?" I demanded. "I should get some sort of recognition for making it to the mall on a day like today!"

The girls (honest, they were girls) in Starbucks were much friendlier. Of course, there were four of them to help eight customers, one for every two customers. So they had an extra dose of charm to dish out. Pretty soon more customers came stomping in – the four-wheel-drive crowd who were getting bored with bumping pedestrians into ditches. Their eyes were preternaturally bright. You could tell their bloodlust was up.

One fellow came in already carrying a Starbucks cup, which he tossed in the wastebasket beside the door. Aha, I thought – obviously a man on a pilgrimage. He was braving the snowstorm by driving from one Starbucks to the next and filling up at each one.

On second thought, he looked an awful lot like the snowplow driver that almost put me under.

After shaking the snow out of my book and digging the ice out of my boots (forget the sock trick), I settled in for a relaxing read while I sipped my extra large cup of Starbucks coffee, double cream, double sugar. I deserved it. Sniff-sniff! (I forgot to take along a tissue.)

In my book I read about the city of Florence, Italy, in the days of Dante, the great Christian poet. Florence was divided between two camps, one of which eventually affiliated with the papal party and the other with the imperial party. Dante chose the wrong party and ended up being banished from Florence. But he eventually exacted his revenge: he assigned all his enemies a place in hell in his *Inferno*.

After a few sips of coffee, I began planning my own version of the *Inferno*: drivers of four-wheel-drive vehicles will spend eternity diving headfirst into icy snowbanks, where they'll be rolled around by thundering snowplows, then plucked out, only to shredded by sharpened snowblower blades. Over and over again. Hoowah!

I haven't yet figured out how to keep the snow from melting in hell. Somehow, a thing so pure and so glorious as drifting snow doesn't fit there.

There are those who envision Paradise as perpetual Spring. Not me. To get to Spring I have to plow through a few snowdrifts first. Perhaps it's still part of my works righteousness.

Naah! It's what manly men were created to do – to brave the elements grunting Hoowah!

Whoops, just a minute – that's the phone.

"Yes, hi honey. I made it to the office intact, and.... Oh, I'm sorry. I forgot you had to take Pamela to work. Did it take long to shovel the driveway?

"Oh, that long, eh? It took me almost that long to walk to work. Let me tell you about my fabulous adventures...."

Ecclesiastes

Politics is also a holy enterprise

Woe to you, O land whose king was a servant
and whose princes feast in the morning.
Blessed are you, O land whose king is of noble birth
and whose princes eat at a proper time -
for strength and not for drunkenness.

Ecclesiastes 10:16, 17

A. A. van Ruler

The book of Ecclesiastes belongs to what is called wisdom literature. It is about a practical wisdom: how should we conceive our lives and our various concerns, and how should we form them?

Such questions by their very nature focus first of all on the individual's practices of everyday life. And the book of Ecclesiastes looks at it from every possible angle.

It is therefore striking that the writer jumps seamlessly to talk about the king and princes (or nobles). He does not consider this to be changing the subject. He is still talking about the individual and his daily life. However, he is deeply convinced that we cannot consider the individual in isolation. There are many other individuals as well. Together they form a community. And this community in turn forms these individuals.

This is one of the mysteries of community: the whole is always more than the sum of the parts. It contains something extra. This is why we can never understand community completely in terms of the individuals that compose it. We must also understand the individual in terms of the community of which he is part. We are never purely ourselves. We are always also part of the whole.

This is why a great deal of current talk about the empowerment and independence of the individual is so shallow, for we are infinitely more determined by the society in which we live than we are aware. The questions confronting our society are therefore just as important as those that confront us in our individual lives. The latter must be approached and resolved by taking into account the perspective of the community.

In reflecting on this interwovenness of the individual and the community, the authorities, the state and politics also enter into our purview. It is strange, but it seems to me that the vast majority keep everything connected with politics far removed from their hearts and spirits.

They may discharge their duty to vote, and if they are at all interested they keep up with the news about their representatives and government. But very few actually join a political party, and even fewer attend political gatherings. They leave politics to the professionals. They feel that for the most part politics is a dirty business. Above all, they feel that politics only deals with the externals of life.

Henry VIII by Hans Holbein

The Preacher wants to cure us of such misconceptions. He goes straight to the heart of the matter. When he begins to talk about politics, he immediately declares: "Woe to you" and "Blessed are you." The weal and woe of the country, of society and of the people depend above all on politics. Politics is fundamentally about two things: prophecy and sanctification or holiness. In terms of prophecy, politics is about the truth of the things of human life. We must know what they are and what they are worth. In terms of holiness, politics is about implementing this truth and making them a reality. These things must be apprehended by the community and by the individual for what they truly are.

Almost everything depends on this for each and every one of us: on politically discovering the truth and translating it into reality. This is why politics, the state and the authorities are so immeasurably important.

The people in authority are no less important. This is where the Preacher puts his emphasis. There are, of course, many other sides to the issue. There are laws – their making and their enforcement. They inject the truth into human life. So it is very important for the laws to be good. There are also institutions, structures and the organization of society. Human beings always live within certain frameworks, and these must be as good as we can make them. The work of shaping them and, if necessary, fighting to improve them is a high and noble calling.

But besides the laws and institutions, the state is also made up of persons. A great deal depends on them. Is the head of state a numbskull? Do those in charge of government business do whatever they please? Do they live high off the hog on public monies? A country with such leadership is on the verge of disaster.

Or is the head of state dedicated and noble-minded? Do those in power know their duty and calling? Do they exert themselves for the good of the citizens? Such a country has a promising future.

We should not just think here only of those in the highest offices. The lower 'gods' also play an important role in the commonwealth. It is a great honor to be a knowledgeable, dependable and friendly official who sits behind a desk to serve the people.

But the same is true of all citizens. The commonwealth may be compared to a huge orchestra. Everyone plays his own instrument, but if everyone plays whatever he pleases, the result is a disaster. Instead of a symphony concert, the result will be a hellish din. We must play our own part meticulously, but at the same time we must pay close attention to our fellow musicians while following the lead of the conductor.

We may in my opinion say without any qualms that a large part of human life is taken up by such activity. And when the state functions like an orchestra and produces a symphony, it is to the praise of our Creator and Redeemer.

We must not get carried away, of course. There's nothing wrong with the king and his ministers having a feast or throwing a party in which they enjoy themselves. The Preacher isn't a pale, pinched miser who wants to ban all enjoyment and luxury from human life. He only says that they shouldn't party all the time and it should not turn into a drunken orgy.

It's a theme that keeps returning in Ecclesiastes: life is an art. To be moderate in all things without denigrating any aspect of reality is an art. It is wrong to be excessive in our enjoyment, but it is no less wrong to be excessive in our seriousness. We must learn how to keep both in the right blend.

This brings us back to the practical wisdom of the individual. But the Preacher insists that the same thing applies for the state and for politics. Human life and the state are not two separate terrains. They are woven inextricably into one another.

One aspect of true wisdom is to see this – in theory as well as in practice. There is something immature about a way of life that focuses only on ones private life, whether as middle class consumer or as a bohemian, while paying no mind to the larger whole. Some are even so immature that they consider the state and society as enemies. Those who do so, however, are in danger of losing all the fruits of godly piety and holiness.

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Service to others can bring us closer to God

Lisa M. Petsche

This is my brand new day starting now
Letting go of the ways that I fall down
The old can be made new, the lost can be found.
– Superchick (Christian band)

There's a wealth of contemporary Christian music being produced these days, and I tune in to it whenever I can. Often, too, I hear it wafting (or blasting) out of my daughter's bedroom stereo. Lately these lyrics by one of her favorite bands, Skillet, have been stuck in my head: "Rebirthing now/I wanna live my life, wanna give you everything/Breathe for the first time now/I come alive somehow." The song, Rebirthing, is about finding meaning and purpose in Christ and feeling fully alive as a result.

For Christians, Lent presents a special opportunity for rebirthing or spiritual renewal. It's a time to look deep inside ourselves to the imperfections that keep us separated from God and one another. "Maybe we're bent and broken" or "maybe we've been living with our eyes half open" as another of my daughter's favorite bands, Switchfoot, speculates in their song, Meant to Live.

Numerous spiritual practises can help us counteract self-centredness – the root of all sin – and achieve greater unity with our Creator. One of them is service to others in a spirit of love. As the Bible says, "God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him" (1John 4:16).

There are, of course, many individuals and causes that can benefit from our assistance. I'd like to focus here on one group of people: those caring for a disabled or ill relative.

They may be family members, friends, neighbors, co-workers or fellow parishioners.

Their role involves physical, psychological, emotional and financial demands, yet their contribution often goes unrecognized in our society and formal supports don't adequately meet their needs.

Allow me to suggest some things that you, as a relative or friend, might do to help prevent a caregiver you know from wearing down and losing hope.

- Keep in touch, recognizing that you may have to make most of the effort in maintaining the relationship. If you live at a distance or otherwise can't visit often, regularly call to see how she's doing or send cards or letters to let her know you're thinking of her.
- Listen non-judgmentally, demonstrate compassion and don't give unsolicited advice. Provide words of support and encouragement.
- Encourage the caregiver to practise self-care by eating nutritiously, exercising and getting sufficient rest in order to maintain good health. Do whatever you can to help make it possible. For example, bring over a meal or offer to sit with the care receiver while the caregiver goes for a walk or takes a nap.
- Ask, rather than guess, what kind of practical help would be most valuable. Perhaps it's vacuuming, doing laundry, walking the dog or running errands. If your assistance is declined, continue to express your desire to help. Meanwhile, take it upon yourself to deliver a casserole or muffins or, if you're a neighbor, sweep both walks or bring in both sets of garbage cans. Encourage the caregiver to ask for and accept help rather than go it alone.
- Surprise her with a treat, such as a rented movie, fresh flowers or a plant, gourmet coffee or tea, or a gift certificate to a favorite restaurant that has takeout and delivery service.
- Give the gift of time. Offer to sit with the care receiver for an hour while the caregiver goes to an appointment or to worship, or for a longer stretch so he can attend a social event.
- Offer to get information about community resources that may be of assistance.

Many of these suggestions also apply to others who may be feeling overwhelmed by life's changes and challenges, such as new parents, single parents, people who are physically or mentally ill and those who are grieving a loss.

Whatever way we choose to observe this Lenten season, when we "feel the peace returning" and once more "feel a fire burning" (Jill Parr, Reach), we will know our spiritual lives are back on track. Then we can fully experience the joy of the Resurrection.

Lisa M. Petsche is a mother of three and a freelance journalist specializing in family life.

What does joy have to do with doing dishes?

John Van Regenmorter

Standing on many kitchen counters is a plastic bottle of dishwashing liquid called Joy. Isn't it rather odd to call a dish soap Joy? Is there anything less "joyful" than the job of scrubbing greasy pots and pans? Why would Procter and Gamble call their product Joy?

Isn't it because the word "joy" has "good vibes"? As J.I Packer states in his book, *Hot Tub Religion*, "Joy is a word that makes one feel bright, and when washing dishes, one needs bright feelings."

Packer is right! He also suggests that the word joy has this effect because it connects us to the deepest desire of our heart. We desire joy. We were created for joy. We will never be satisfied unless we have joy!

But what is joy? Contrary to popular belief, joy is not the same as wearing a smile. Joy is something we can possess, even while our tears strike the ground.

Nor is joy the same as "being happy." Things that make us happy – fun, recreation, a good job, a beautiful home – are all subject to change and loss. Joy is a permanent possession.

Four characteristics of joy

According to Packer, joy has four characteristics. First, joy flows from the assurance that we are loved. No one can have joy who does not believe that he or she is valued, accepted, and cared for.

At Bethany, we understand this truth. We know how important it is for all children to know what it means to be loved, and this understanding motivates us to find adoptive and foster homes for children who have not known love. Above all, it is our hope that children and families in this imperfect world of imperfect families will know what it means to be valued and loved by a perfect Heavenly Father.

Second, joy comes from accepting one's situation in life. People who are always whining about the way things are rob themselves of joy. Joy comes from believing that God ultimately works all things for the good of those who love him (Romans 8:28).

Third, joy comes from having something worthwhile to possess. If nothing you have seems very worthwhile, then you will have little joy. Spouses, children, friends, the ability to work and enjoy life, are all possessions that can help us experience joy. But even if we have none of these, we can possess something worth more than all of these put together: an intimate relationship with the God of the universe and the assurance of eternal life through his Son, Jesus Christ.

Fourth, joy comes from giving something worth giving. Our self-absorbed society might not understand that giving is a source of joy, but it is. Is there anyone who has given something worthwhile in Christ's name who did not experience joy in the giving?

Speaking of giving, was there ever a gift more worth giving than the gift of the Savior? Undoubtedly there was not only joy in the hearts of those who received the gift, but joy in the heart of the Giver as well.

This article first appeared on CRConnect. Note that its location on the Web has changed: http://crconnect.blogspot.com/

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Life challenges

Lost lessons in courage

Lynn Marie-Ittner Klammer

As a psychologist, I have often been involved with the seriously ill. Time and again I have seen people derive inspiration from a patient's heroic struggle in the face of adversity. However, I have also witnessed many valuable lessons lost by the myopic focus on the patient alone.

I learned long ago that where there is one need there are always others, and when those other needs are overlooked in deference to the most obvious, remarkable lessons in life can be easily missed.

I work with a ministry that offers emotional support to those undergoing difficult medical circumstances. I currently have four patients assigned to me, but one in particular stands out. She's a thirteen-year-old girl with a lot on her shoulders right now. What illness does she have, you wonder? Is it Hepatitis B? Is it cancer? No, she's completely healthy…but she has a younger sister who is fighting ovarian cancer.

Are you wondering why she needs support? After all, she's not the one who is sick, right? Her needs are far from the most obvious in her family. However, Nicole has a stressful role to fill right now. Nicole is the big sister…and Nicole is the "big sister" in more ways than one. She's older, but she's also big in spirit, love and courage.

It was Nicole who first brought my attention to her sister's case. I had heard about the little girl with cancer in our small community, but there are so many children struggling with such afflictions every day. It is Nicole who I believe turned the thoughts of so many in our town to her sister's direction. It was Nicole who set the example of selflessness and community action, reminding everyone that they could actually do something to help. Nicole organized "Kookies for Katie" (a school bake sale). She spearheaded a funding drive to benefit the hospital her sister was receiving treatment at (raising $11,000 at last count), and much more.

Nicole is a somewhat unusual case because she stands out, but siblings of seriously ill children often fade into the background when a family is in crisis, and are easily overlooked. They suffer the same torment that the rest of the family endures, and face similar fears. The big difference is that, as children, they shoulder the additional burden of being helpless to contribute to the family's struggle in adult ways. While the adults scurry about to doctor appointments and treatments, siblings are usually left to carry on without the benefit of their usual routine and support system. Add to this the intellectual and maturity limitations of a young mind, and the situation can be overwhelming.

Nicole is facing this challenge right now as she watches her sister battle cancer…but it seems that Nicole realized early on that no medical battle is ever truly waged alone. Nicole carries on her routine. She attends school, plays on the team…and stands tall beside her sister. She tries to take an active roll and set the example for others. I know that her endeavors have helped others find a way to feel less helpless, and I have to believe that applying herself to organizing these projects has eased her mind as well.

Courage comes in many forms. When a family member is seriously ill people often view the patient as the one with all the courage, but I've often marveled even more at the courage of those who love the patient. Family and friends persevere through the long and difficult treatments, and provide love and support that never falters under profound emotional strain. It's an amazing thing to witness…just as Nicole's devotion to her sister has been.

If you know someone who is struggling with a serious illness, it's certainly important to be supportive of that person. However, I urge you to take a moment to look around. It may take a little more time and thought, but where there is one need, there are always others – and you may find a lesson in devotion and courage in a place you didn't expect it.

http://www.chemoangels.com/

Jesus, send the cops

Daphne Simpkins

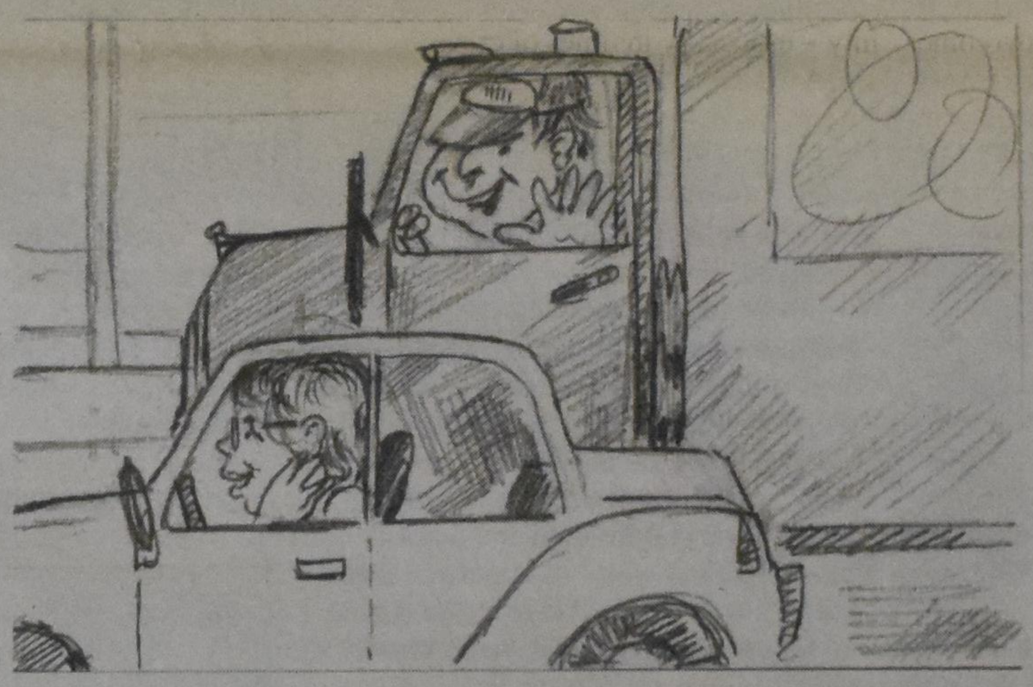
Mildred Budge was just steering out of Wal-Mart when an ambulance veered in and stopped by the main entrance to the parking lot. Mildred cast a concerned glance over her shoulder; and if she had looked too long, she wouldn't have seen the speeding white Hummer that turned short and barely missed sending her to heaven in that moment.

Jesus, send the cops!" she prayed, reaching the traffic light as it turned red.

Like the other drivers, Millie Budge sat with her tidy foot on the brakes, her black and red Mini-Cooper pulsing to the jive tempo of idling machinery, and she marveled that she was not nearly as impatient as her car telegraphed to other drivers. Looking about, she smiled diffidently as the unexpected gaze of a trucker found hers. Then, Miss Budge flushed when he tapped two grease-stained fingers to his brow and mouthed the old-fashioned words, "Howdy, ma'am."

Mildred had always liked men who had a relationship with petroleum-based products and felt inexplicably flattered to be acknowledged by one who obviously was a master of his destiny on the road. She automatically reached to tighten her bra strap but stopped, sending her fingers to fluff the curls at the back of her head instead.

The trucker, assuming that the curl fluffing was a form of come hither, let his blood-shot eyes shine with greeting. Then, he pressed a button and his big truck rocked with noise, and Mildred thought to herself: 'I am the cause of a public disturbance!' The idea pleased the staid church woman enormously. If the truck driver with the grease-stained hands had been standing beneath a balcony serenading her with violinists, Mildred Budge could not have been more flattered. Her smile grew.



Instantly, she traveled back in time on decades of romance-induced smiles, looking up into the rearview mirror expecting to find her girlish dimples which she had been famous for at 17, but all she saw now were the deepest kinds of wrinkles that no face cream could fix, and she certainly wasn't going to pump poison into the temple of the Lord by buying Botox treatments. Even though it was against her common sense and religion, Mildred Budge always watched the Botox commercials. And those ones about dermabrasion. She wasn't sure what dermabrasion meant, really, but she thought it had something to do with scraping away time – dusting the layers of wrinkles on one's face with a miniature version of a floor polishing machine. Repenting of one's sins in prayers seemed a simpler matter, and while one resisted repenting, the effects were youthening and refreshing.

Proud that she had resisted the powerful pull of a poisoned smile (though she was still thinking about dermabrasion), Mildred prepared to attempt an artless shoulder shrug (okay, her bra strap was slipping!) that she had recently seen resurrected by the models on "Deal or No Deal" when they opened the money cases for Howie Mandel, who was astonishingly attractive for a bald man wearing an earring. Miss B. had just finished her shoulder roll, when something fast flashed in her rearview mirror, and she saw the reckless racing return of the white Hummer that had found its destination behind her, then hung a U-ie, and was heading violently back toward her.

The Hummer was coming right at her, going to send Miss Budge to heaven this time for sure before she was ready to go, and in that instant with passion pulsing to the right of her and her apparently certain death coming from the rear, Mildred Budge remembered the ambulance parked in front of Wal-Mart – and they could get to her fast if it came to that – and she said, "Thank you, Jesus for preparing our way before us." And as soon as she did, grace happened. The heavens opened up and the red light blinked out, replaced by the friendly green. Miss Budge looked regretfully up at the trucker, whose oversized truck didn't have the pick up her red and black Mini-Cooper did.

So he wouldn't think her rude, Millie Budge trilled her fingers in the air as if she was still 17, toed the gas pedal, taking off delicately into the traffic, only to have her graceful, grace-ordained, heaven-blessed departure marred by the sudden swerve of that nervy white Hummer that peeled past the truck.

With all of the insolence of youth at its worst, the Hummer scorched past the two would-be, could-be almost acquaintances participating in the dance of daylight, and Mildred, with her just bought milk in the back seat needing to be in the refrigerator and grateful for the conveniently parked ambulance at the ready in front of Wal-mart but apparently not needed for her, prayed her ambulance prayer anyway: "Lord, be merciful to us, we're strangers. Sinners," she corrected with a frown, as she saw a car literally pushed off the road by the bullying Hummer. Then the church lady added a prayerful P.S. that incongruously arose to her lips right after an expression of gratitude for grace: "Jesus, send the cops."

Pastoral Excellence

Celebrating the smaller church (Part 1)

Small churches have big appeal

Rachel Boehm Van Harmelen

Do small churches suffer from inferiority complexes? Elzo Tenyenhuis, pastor of a small Christian Reformed church in Kincardine, Ontario, admits that small churches often struggle with issues of self-perception. "In smaller churches, there may be feelings of jealousy since larger congregations are more able to engage in more impressive programs," Tenyenhuis says.

Rev. Vern Swieringa pastors a small congregation in Gibson, Michigan. He agrees that feelings of jealousy can plague small church ministries. When he and two other Christian Reformed Church pastors in Western Michigan formed a small church peer group, their initial meetings tended to focus on the negative. "We spent the majority of our time talking about the things we couldn't do because our congregations were small," Swieringa says.

Swieringa and his peers decided they needed to do something to change that. They applied for, and received, a peer learning grant from the Christian Reformed Church's Sustaining Pastoral Excellence project to identify and celebrate what God is doing in the life and ministries of smaller congregations.

Their deliberate decision to focus on the positive aspects of being small has transformed their group and their ministries. "We began to discover the blessings of pastoring small churches," Swieringa says. "We didn't feel as defeated as we did before. It's not that the challenges of being small have ceased to exist," says Swieringa, "but our focus turned toward the positive impact our small congregations have on the universal church."

"We live in a climate where small is of little account," says Rev. Gerrit Haagsma, pastor of Kibbie CRC in South Haven, Michigan, and a partner with Swieringa in the small church peer group. Haagsma says it's time for small churches to look at themselves through a different lens. "We discovered that we had often underappreciated God's work among us because we saw things through big church eyes."

Thinking positively about small

In his experiences pastoring a small church, Tenyenhuis has struggled firsthand with the challenges of being small. "There are fewer resources to widen ministry approaches and fewer people to run programs, which can lead to leadership burnout," Tenyenhuis says. On the other hand, like Haagsma and Swieringa have discovered, Tenyenhuis points out that there are many positive aspects of being a smaller congregation. "In a small church, each member is significant, known, and needed by the rest," he says. "There is a greater sense of connectedness to membership and local community – especially in times of crisis."

"A wonderful characteristic of a healthy small congregation is intimacy," says Swieringa. His peer group conducted a survey to help identify what members valued about being part of a small church and intimacy topped the list. "The simple fact that I know nearly everyone by name in my church gives me a real sense of belonging to a family," wrote one survey respondent. "Being a member of a small congregation, I have seen God working in people's lives at a personal level," wrote another respondent.

"This is not to say that members of large churches don't experience intimacy," says Swieringa, "but intimacy is more of a challenge for larger congregations, where it is a natural characteristic of healthy small congregations."

In addition to aspects of closeness and intimacy, survey respondents expressed appreciation for their pastors' ability to target the message to their particular needs and experiences because of the church's small size. "In a small church, the pastor has the opportunity to really know what is happening in the lives of his members," says Swieringa.

Positive peer pressure is another natural characteristic of a healthy small church that survey respondents identified. "In a small congregation, it is hard not to see what others are doing to serve. To sit back and not get involved in the church's life feels unnatural," said a member from one of the congregations surveyed.

Swieringa and Haagsma say their small church peer group involvement has also taught them to accept the limitations of being small. "We became more cognizant of the fact that a small church cannot do all the things a large church can do," says Haagsma. "We have asked ourselves instead, 'What is it that we can do well?'"

"The work of our group has already impacted our churches," says Haagsma. "In the context where very big congregations often get noticed and 'bigger is better,' we have begun to see wonderful things God was doing in our own smaller congregations. We've been able to encourage each other through difficult financial times and other issues that confront our small churches."

Growing in depth

Asked if celebrating the small might hinder church growth, Tenyenhuis says that need not be the case. "Celebrating small is fine unless staying small is the goal," Tenyenhuis says.

"When you get a positive self image, you're going to start growing deeper, and that's the first step to church growth," Swieringa says. "We are not de-emphasizing evangelism, but we believe there is a place for small congregations to be a welcoming point for people to enter the church."

Swieringa says he is delighted to see that his new hopefulness about small church ministry has begun to filter down to the congregation – an experience he hopes to help replicate in small churches throughout North America. "We're not lamenting our smallness anymore; we're celebrating it, but always with the goal of reaching out."

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Combined Children's Choir

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Director in charge of
Guelph Symphony Orchestra
Simon Irving

Director in charge of Combined Children's Choir
Elizabeth Webster

Soprano Soloist
Jennifer McMahon

Conductor
Willem van Suijdam

Master of Ceremonies
Michael Coren

Ticket prices: $40. - $33. - $25.

Tickets are available from: Hamilton Place Box Office, Ticket Master, Liberation Choir Members, selected Dutch Stores and at Pianohouse Burlington, 5205 Harvester Road, Burlington.

Welcome to my perch
Bert Witvoet

Do you hate your neighbor?

A few years ago, I was at a funeral in one of the churches in town. The pastor read several sections from the Bible, as is often done at Christian funerals. But he also read a section from the Heidelberg Catechism, a teaching document that dates back to the time of the Reformation and which is used in various churches of the Reformed persuasion. The Heidelberg Catechism begins by asking: "What is your only comfort in life and in death?" The first part of the answer is: "That I am not my own but belong – body and soul, in life and in death – to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ." It's a comforting passage for those who grieve and believe.

The pastor went on to the next few questions and answers (in each case, he would pose the question, and the congregation would read the answer). The question was about God's law and whether or not we can live up to the law perfectly. The answer: "No. I have a natural tendency to hate God and my neighbor." The reading ended on this sour note.

A stark picture

I personally have no problem with the concept of humanity's innate desire to hate because I understand the teaching. But in front of me sat a couple who smiled at each other when we came to the "hate" part. I could almost read their minds. They seemed to be saying: "What's this nonsense about hating God and neighbor?" I wished I could have had an opportunity to engage them in an exchange of views on this teaching, but funerals are not for discussing theology. If I had been the pastor, I would have ended the reading on a more positive note, though, especially since he would not be able to explain the passage.

I can well understand why people not immersed in the teachings of the Bible cringe at the thought that our human condition starts out with hatred. Surely, it's not as black and white as that. Read today's newspaper. I predict that you will find good-news and bad-news stories in it. Isn't Plato right when he describes our condition as a carriage pulled by two horses who want to go in opposite directions? We are a mixed bag of goodness and evil and thousands of shades in between, aren't we? Ask yourself the question: "Do I hate my neighbor?" Even if you take "neighbor" in the narrowest sense of the word, you will probably answer: "No, I don't hate my neighbor. We get along pretty well."

Psychological measures

The difficulty here, as I see it, is that we often think and talk exclusively at the psychological level. Ever since Sigmund Freud, we evaluate relationships in terms of the self and our feelings. That's been very helpful. But Scripture, when it talks about our relation to God and other people, uses spiritual, not psychological categories. When you evaluate at the psychological level, you use emotional gauges and often take your own experience as the measuring stick: "I like that man. He has a nice personality." When you engage in spiritual evaluation, you use God's will as it is expressed in Scripture as the yardstick. God is holy. God is perfect in goodness and beauty. God is Love. God expects the same from us. But none of us measures up. And whether we fail by an inch or a mile, it doesn't really matter in this spiritual business – we fall short of the glory of God and we are stuck, unless God steps in to save us through his Son, Jesus Christ.

A radio minister once talked about the fact that many people in our culture who call themselves Christian, use a work-righteousness approach to their salvation. He put it this way: suppose you ask an Olympic athlete who won the gold medal in javelin to throw a stone as far as he can. You then pick up a stone and throw it as far as you can. In all likelihood the athlete will far surpass you in distance. But suppose the purpose of the competition is to throw a stone onto the surface of the moon. Does it matter whether the athlete throws farther than you do? Neither one of you can throw far enough.

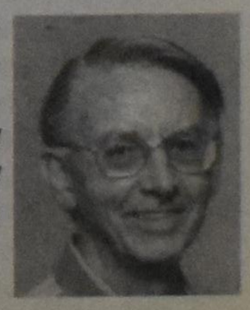
An accurate measure

The bad news for self-improvement moralists is that you can't be a little fallen from grace, just like you can't be a little pregnant. The gospel message makes sense only if you start out by confessing that you are hopelessly mired in sin – that "I have a natural tendency to hate God and my neighbor." This is not a put-down doctrine. It's a descriptive doctrine that puts us all at the same level. People who deeply believe this are not astonished by evil, for example. They see themselves as no better than Karla Homolka and Paul Bernardo because they are capable of the same thing. You and I need salvation just as much as the worst criminal. Thank God it's available to everyone.

A former pastor gave an enlightening example of how using an imperfect measuring device wreaks havoc on our lives. He decided to build himself an outhouse near his cottage. He had no level and his neighbor's shed was locked. So he improvised. He took a measuring cup with a line all around it, filled it with water and used it to see whether his structure was level. He was rather proud of his own ingenuity. But when it came time to add the fourth wall to his outhouse, he couldn't make it fit, and adding a roof to it was a total disaster. A few days later, when his neighbor was around again and let him use a real level, he right away saw how far out his outhouse had been.

And so, it all depends on whether you use God's law to determine whether you are good or bad, or whether you use social and psychological measuring cups. In the end, though, the truth about our spiritual status will come out. If you believe, as I do, that there is a judgment day coming, then you will know – *that* is the time the fourth wall and roof are added to our structure.

Bert Witvoet is the former editor of CC, now retired, who stays active by editing the Christian Educators Journal *and preaching the occasional sermon. He tries to stay informed by hearing and reading the daily news and Reformed by looking for writers and speakers who can tell the forest from the trees.*



The fight against slavery is not over

Ghana child slaves fishing

COLLINGWOOD, ON – As the world prepares to mark the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade in the British Empire, I.N. (International Needs) Network Canada continues to fight on the front-lines of the battle against this worst form of human exploitation.

"By partnering with Christian nationals in the nation of Ghana, West Africa, I.N. Network Canada has helped to secure the voluntary release of more than 3,500 Trokosi slave women and more than 16,000 children," says John Denbok, executive director of I.N. Network Canada. "I.N. church planters have literally transformed that nation by sharing the gospel," he adds, "by working – not to be disruptive of the unique Ghana culture – but redemptive within it."

Many villages in that country continue to believe that the only way to appease the fetish gods for sins committed by past generations is to offer their young virgin daughters to the village priests as shrine slaves. The girls, some as young as seven years old, are forced to work for the priests by day and after puberty, act as sexual partners for the priests by night. It is a life sentence of hard work and sexual servitude.

Rev. Walter Pimpong, executive director of I.N. Network Ghana, recently featured on 60 Minutes, leads the liberation effort, patiently teaching the village chiefs, elders and fetish priests, convincing them it's in the best interests of the entire community to let the Trokosi slaves go free. Once free, I.N. Network helps train the women, equipping them with skills for independent living.

"We tell the villagers that God has sent his son to pay the penalty for their sins and the sins of their fathers," says Pimpong. "Not only are people being freed in body, they are being freed in spirit."

I. N. Network is an interdenominational Christian organization, operating in 33 countries on six continents, that creates effective partnerships in evangelism, discipleship and community development. Recognizing that the most effective way to reach people for Christ is through Christians in their own countries, I.N. Network uses a full-fledged indigenous approach focused on ministering 'with' people, rather than 'for' people.

It was in March, 1807 that British parliament abolished trade in human lives. Twenty-six years later, in 1833, an act was passed giving freedom to all slaves in the British Empire, including Canada. As noted by the Archbishop of Canterbury in his Christmas 2006 message, this was achieved, "not by enlightened and progressive European intellectuals convinced theoretically of the equality of human beings, but by Christian people who were passionately persuaded of the dignity of lives touched by the incarnate Word of God."

Unfortunately, slavery continues in many places around the world today, but Christians like Rev. Pimpong, working with the I.N. Network, are making a significant difference.

John Denbok, Executive Director
I. N. Network Canada
Email: jdenbok@sympatico.ca

Business Directory

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Classifieds

Birthday

On March 5, 2007

Fennie Flokstra-Drok

will celebrate her **95th Birthday**

Your children:
Coby(deceased) & Koop
John & Evelyn
Casey & Marijke
Joe
Grace & Henry
Andy & Margaret
Jeanette & Greg
grandchildren & great-grandchildren

We are thankful that the Lord continues to provide you with good health and much joy in your life. Happy Birthday Mom, Oma and Oma-Oma to her great-grandchildren

Correspondence address:
209-1415 Upper Wellington St
Hamilton ON L9A 5E8

Anniversaries

Winterswijk, GLD Woodstock, ON

Psalm 121

By God's grace, we are grateful to be able to celebrate the **55th Wedding Anniversary** of our parents, grandparents, & great-grandparents

JOHN AND DINIE GREVERS (nee **Ruessink**)

on Sunday March 11th DV.
We thank God with you,
and pray that he will continue to be very near you both.

Much love from:
Mary & Al Griffith, *Woodstock*
Henry & MaryLou Grevers, *Woodstock*
Jennie & Dez – Holland, Malory
Jay & Dori – Brennan, Payton
Ryan & Corinna
Brandon
Lindsay
Harry & Grace Schipper, *Eden*
Erica
Laura
Darryl
Anita
Bernice & Tim Bentum, *Woodstock*
Timothy & Caroline
Heidi
Denise
Emily
Ingrid & Bill Los, *Listowel*
Robin & Joel
Rosanna
Derek
Megan
Janelle

Home address: 28 – 928 Lorene, Woodstock ON N4S 5N8

Guelph, 1957 March 9 Mississauga, 2007

With joy and thankfulness to our dear Lord
We celebrate with our children and grandchildren our **50th Wedding Anniversary**

WALTER AND LIA JANSEN (nee **Koens**)

Cora & Gerald VanWyck –Thomas, Jennifer, Christopher
Rose & Chris Peters – Alex, Ryan, Madison
Heather & John Kuurstra – Philip, Alan, Michael
Ingrid & Todd Cooper – Natalie, Stephanie
Jacqueline & Trent DeJong – Dylan, Tyler, Dara, Casey

Home address: 938 Cristina Court, Mississauga ON L5J 4S1
waltnlia@arvotek.net

To celebrate this event
on March 10,
we invite you to the **Open House**
2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
in the **ClearView CRC,** in Oakville
2300 Sheridan Garden Drive.

Anniversary

Great is Thy Faithfulness!

Our special parents

JOHN AND WILMA
(nee **Lautenbach**) **PEEREBOOM**

will celebrate their
50th Wedding Anniversary
on March 16, 2007!

Children:
Peter (Christine), *Victoria, BC,*
William (Connie), *Victoria BC,*
Theresa (Ron), *Edmonton, AB.*
Grandchildren:
Sharlene, Daryl, Christopher, Richard, Nicole, Michael, John and Andrew

We are having an **Open House** to celebrate this time with our parents:
Date:
Saturday, March 24, 2007
Time: 2 – 4 p.m.
Location:
First Christian Reformed Church
(661 Agnes Street, Victoria, BC)

Our parent's address:
Mr. & Mrs. J Peereboom
530 Broadway Avenue
Victoria BC V8Z 2E8

March 18
DUTCH SERVICE
will be held in
the Ancaster
Christian
Reformed
Church at
3:00 p.m.
Rev.
John Klomps
will be preaching.

Obituaries

HENK WIKKERINK

aged 79 went to be with his Lord on Jan. 14, 2007 after a short struggle with cancer.

He is survived by his loving wife Tjitsche (Weenink) and
children Martin, Irene (Kim), Paul (Peng), Andrè, Renè (Priscilla) and 8 grandchildren.

Predeceased by daughter Marcella (2004) and son-in-law Herb (1988)

Correspondence: T. Wikkerink KT803-35 Kingknoll Dr, Brampton ON L6Y 5G5

Obituaries

DEBORAH OPTHOF-ROOSE

After a lengthy illness, the Lord took home his child, Deborah, on January 22, 2007 in her 87th year.

Beloved wife of John for 56 years. Loving mother to Cathy Parkinson (Stuart) of *Brantford*, John of *Smithville*, Bill (Helen) of *Grimsby*, Neil (Tena) of *Calgary*, Corinne Opthof-Bick (Clarence) of *Ancaster*, Elizabeth Szwarc (Mark) of *Barrie*.

Cherished Oma of 16 grandchildren and one great-grandchild. Sister to Adrian Roose (Maike) of *Holland*.

There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light and they will reign forever and ever. Revelation 22:5

Thank you to all who have supported and cared for her, especially the staff at Shalom and the congregation of Mountainview Christian Reformed Church.

Correspondence: 405 -12 Bartlett Ave
Grimsby ON L3M 0A2

1974 2007

On February 2, 2007, after a brief, but intense battle with cancer, the Lord took Home his faithful servant

LEN VEENSTRA

Len's life was a testament to God's grace. When he was diagnosed we prayed for a miracle, but God in His wisdom had a better miracle for him. Len, the shy, the fearful, faced death without fear. Sadness, frustration, disappointment, but never fear. Len's faith and humour sustained him and were evident even in the service he planned. His casket was a plain wooden one, decorated with two large "RETURN TO SENDER" stamps – Len's idea – a last laugh to cancer and a witness to his final destination.

Len left this earth to the strains of a boys group singing Dvorak's "Going Home" and his coffin left the church to the same strains. God's grace abounded.

Len was predeceased by his Dad in 1997 and is survived by his mom,
Coby Veenstra – van Duyvenvoorde
and his siblings:
Jessica & Paul Brooks
Mark & Sara Veenstra
Kristina, Stephanie, Jordan, Illianna and Jacob

Correspondence address: 74 Farris Ave
St Catharines ON L2S 3W6

Peacefully, at Strathmere Lodge in Strathroy, Ontario, in her 93rd year, God called home his child,

HARMINA VANARRAGON-LINDE

on February 7, 2007, after a long life of service to her God, her family, her church and her community.

Dearly loved wife of the late (Gerrit) Willem Van Arragon (2004)

Dear Mom of:
Jenny & Martin Oldengarm, *Kitchener, ON*
Geertje & Charles Bamford, *San Jose, CA*
MaryAnn & Jerry Kingma, *Strathroy, ON*
Gary & Gretchen van Arragon, *Guelph, ON*
Leo & Cathy van Arragon, *Ottawa, ON*
Harma Badgley & Ken Laird, *Trenton, ON*
Wilma van Arragon & Ralph Linder, *Chicago, IL*
Wayne Collinson, *Mount Brydges, ON*
Mike Parker & Eleanor Thompson, *Belleville, ON*
Dan Fletcher, *Oakville, ON*

Cherished oma of 19 grandchildren and their spouses and 18 great-grandchildren.

Also survived by her sister Ge Linde of Zuidwolde, the Netherlands.

Pre-deceased by 8 brothers and sisters.

We are grateful to the Lord for our mother's long life, and her service to her Lord, his family, her church and her community.

The interment took place at a private family ceremony in Strathroy, prior to the memorial service, which was held at the Westmount Christian Reformed Church, Strathroy, ON, on Monday, February 12, 2007. The service was officiated by Rev. Fred Vanderberg.

As a tribute to Harmina's memory, donations may be made to the Christian Blind Mission or the Strathroy Community Christian School. A tree wil be planted as a living memorial to Harmina.

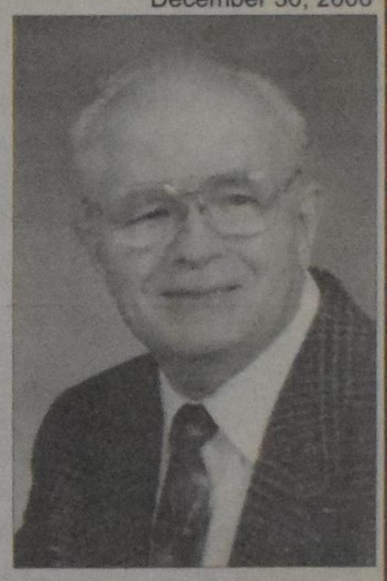
Correspondence: MaryAnn & Jerry Kingma
28256 Pike Road RR 7, Strathroy ON N7G 3H8

March 4, 1913 December 30, 2006

On December 30, 2006

CHRISTIAAN TROELSTRA

died peacefully in his sleep at the age of 93 years. Funeral service was held on January 4, 2007 at the Terrace Christian Reformed Church, Pastor Joel Ringma officiating.



Chris was born March 4, 1913 in Friesland to Sjerp and Akke Troelstra, the second oldest in a family of seven children. From the age of seven, Chris was raised in Limburg, Holland where he learned the trade of shoemaker. In 1947, he married Aaltje Van Barneveld. In 1954, Chris, Ali and three daughters immigrated to Terrace, B.C. where they had three more children – one son and two daughters. Chris was one of the pioneer members of the Terrace Christian Reformed Church, having served on the consistory, as choir director and as organist in the early years. He enjoyed music, reading, gardening and especially the time he spent with his family and grandchildren. Chris supported his family with his shoe repair business until his retirement in 1978.

Chris was a hardworking, intelligent and gentle man who loved the Lord. He was a wonderful husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather. He will be greatly missed by all those whose lives he touched.

Chris is survived by Ali, his wife of 59 years,
His children: Berta (Martin) den Haan, *Abbotsford, B.C.*
Anka (Terry) Manders, *Summerland, B.C.*
Audrey Walsh, *Vancouver, B.C.*
Pete (Irene) Troelstra, *Langley, B.C.*
Cheryl (Wayne) Wyatt, *Terrace, B.C.*
Elizabeth (John) Van Dyk, *Kelowna, B.C.*
19 grandchildren, 7 great-grandchildren and two brothers.

He was predeceased by three sisters, one brother, and an infant son.

Correspondence: Ali Troelstra, 10-4701 Kirby Ave, Terrace BC V8G 5V4

Job Opportunities

Personnal

Christian, divorced woman age 42, dutch background, would like to correspond with christian man approx. same age in Alberta for long term relationship.
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c/o Christian Courier
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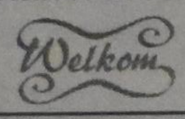

Job Opportunites

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- Be able to converse in the Dutch language
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Applicants please contact:

Sherri Davis c/o Shalom Manor,
12 Bartlett Ave, Grimsby ON L3M 4N5
ph 905-945-9631 ext.1159 fx 905-945-1211
Apdebruyne@aol.com
**Please note change of email address*

Church Liaison Worker

This is a volunteer position.

THE HOPE CENTRE – a 17 year old Christian outreach in Brampton, is seeking a volunteer Church Liaison worker to work with our team and its coordinator. This will be a challenging position, designed to build a stronger relationship between the Hope Centre and Local Christian Churches. A minimum 10 hours, self directed time, including time with the Board or Coordinator is required each week. The goal of the position is build bridges to the churches, so we can support their efforts and they ours. You will regularly contact all the local churches, develop contacts, keep the churches informed, develop Hope Helpers in the Churches, assist churches with outreach programs we may help them on, and so on and work with the Hope Centre and its staff and volunteers and support our goals. You must become a member ($15) per year and be a member in good standing of your church and have a pastor' recommendation. You must be able to drive to meetings. Good communications (Written, spoken, computer) are required.

Please submit your application and resume to:
Ralph Masena, Search Committee Member
and Ed Appleton, Coordinator,
Hope Centre
Unit 25 A,160 Main Street South, Brampton ON L6W 2E1
or by email at **hope.centre@hotmail.com**
or call us at **905-790-2273**

Job Opportunities

Ordained Pastor with emphasis on Younger Members:

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in **Ancaster, Ontario**, Canada is seeking a full-time ordained pastor who is able to provide spiritual leadership to youth in a relational ministry setting and also work in cooperation with a Lead Pastor.
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or email
ancasterchristianrc@bellnet.ca

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David Bosma, Box 183
Fairview Alberta T0H 1L0
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dbosma@adfreemail.com

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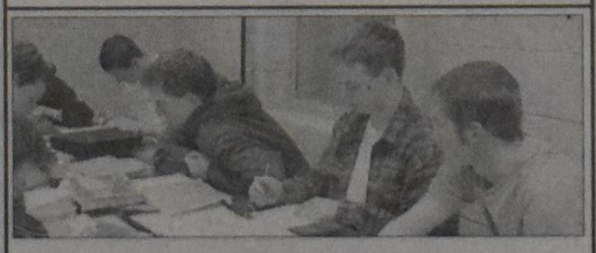
by April 30, 2007.



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For more information, please check our website: www.tdchristian.ca

tdchristian

Job Opportunities

OTTAWA CHRISTIAN SCHOOL is seeking qualified applicants for a definite opening for a 60% **senior kindergarten position** commencing in September 2007. If you love Christ and his children, have an Ontario Teacher's Certificate, a Christian School Teacher's Certificate or their equivalents and are interested in being part of a dynamic team of educators we look forward to hearing from you.

Please send your resume and a statement of faith to:
Paul Triemstra, Principal, Ottawa Christian School
2191 Benjamin Ave.,
Ottawa Ontario K2A 1P6
Tel: (613) 722-5836 Fax: (613) 722-0665
Email: paul@ocschool.org
Website: www.ocschool.org

WILLOWDALE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL,
TORONTO, ONTARIO

A school striving for academic excellence and promoting a Christ-centred worldview invites applications for 2 maternity leaves and a possible full time teaching position, effective September 2007. Candidates with a CSTC will be given preference. Science and Physical Education expertise will also be appreciated.

Please send resume including a Philosophy of Education Statement to:

Attn: Ms. Mary Jansen, Principal
Willowdale Christian School
60 Hilda Avenue, North York ON M2M 1V5
P: **416-222-1711** F: 416-222-1939
mjansen@willowdalechristianschool.org

HOUSTON CHRISTIAN SCHOOL invites applications for a possible position in the **lower elementary area** for September 2007. We anticipate 116 students in Gr. K-12 for the next school year, seven in Gr. K, six in Gr. 1 and ten in Gr. 2, six in Gr. 3.

Houston is forestry-based community of about 4000 people. Our students come from mainly four local churches: Baptist, Canadian Reformed, Christian Reformed and Pentecostal.

Please call, fax or e-mail. Jack VandenBorn, Principal
Phone: **250-845-7736** (school) 250-845-3778 (home)
Fax: 250-845-7738 E-mail **hcschoo/@telus.net**

IMMANUEL CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, in Lethbridge, Alberta,

is seeking a **band/choir instructor** beginning in the 2007/2008 school year. The successful candidate will be a committed Christian with a strong background especially in instrumental music. The position will be full-time or part-time, depending on qualifications for music and other subject areas. The music portion of the position will be a maximum of .75 and will include Band in grades 5 through 12. Choir at the junior and senior high level will also be a possibility, as well as a music appreciation class at the grade seven level. Additional courses at the junior or senior high level will be required to make the position full-time.

Interested candidates are encouraged to contact
Ed DeYoung, Principal,
Immanuel Christian High School,
802 – 6th Ave N, Lethbridge AB T1H 0S1
(403)329-4783 edeyoung@immanuelcs.ca

DUNNVILLE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

is looking for a teacher for the combined **Junior/Senior Kindergarten** program, beginning Sept., 2007. Currently, this is a part-time, 60% position. If you love the Lord and His children, and love the challenge to teach our recent, exciting curriculum for young children, we want to hear from you.
Please send resume, statements of faith and philosophy of education, as well as your reasons for wanting to teach four-and five-year old children, to the attention of

Mr. Arie J. Vanderstoel, Principal,
Dunnville Christian School
37 Robinson Road, Dunnville ON N1A 2W1
Phone 905-774-5142 Fax 905-774-5519.
E-mail principal@dunnvillechristianschool.ca
Website: www.dunnvillechristianschool.ca

Please see page 22 for more employment opportunities

Job Opportunites/Advertising

LACOMBE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

has two possible openings for the 2007-2008 school year:

1. Junior High Social Studies and Language Arts
2. Elementary teacher (grade to be determined)

Applicants should preferably be graduates of a Christian college and/or have teaching experience in a Christian school. L.C.S. is an interdenominational school K-9 with an enrolment of 407 students. Applicants should also have a commitment for a reformed world and life view of Christian education. The ability and interest in coaching an extracurricular sport would be an asset.

Please send resumes to:

Martin Folkerts, Principal
Lacombe Christian School
5206 - 58 Street, Lacombe AB T4L 109
PH: **403-782-6531**; FAX: **403-782~5760** or email: **mfolkerts(@lacs.ca**

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For further information contact:

Rosanne van der Woerd,
109-3260 New St.
Burllngton, On. L7N 3L4

Ph: **905-681-0311**
Email: rvanderwoerd@sympatico.ca

PACIFIC CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

Victoria, B.C.

Director of Operations

As part of the senior management team for Pacific Christian School, the Director of Operations must have:

- Excellent finance/business/accounting knowledge and related experience
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  - policy analysis/development, and
  - financial reporting/analysis.

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Salary Grid commencing Sept. 07 is currently under review.

To view a full job description, visit:
www.pacificchristian.ca

Forward resume, covering letter and pastor's reference to:
Frank Low, Search Committee Chair at frank.low@rbc.com
Applications will be received until March 16, 2007

*Date duties will commence is negotiable

Please see our website; **www.christiancourier.ca**
for recently run job positions. Also for information on issue dates and deadlines, contact and location information and links to some of our advertisers.

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vents/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

ar 2 Niagara Life Centre presents The Niagara Peninsula Orchestra, 7:30 p.m. at Covenant CRC, **St. Catharines**. See ad this issue.

lar 2 & 3 Woodstock Dutch Theatre Groep - "Ik Voel Nattingheid" - Market Centre Theatre, 22 Reeve St, **Woodstock**, Ont. 8 p.m. Phone 519-283-6285 for more information or see ad, Feb. 5 issue.

lar 9 & 10 Woodstock Dutch Theatre Groep - "Ik Voel Nattingheid" - Market Centre Theatre, **Woodstock**, Ont. 8 p.m. See ad Feb 5 issue for details or call 519-283-6285.

lar 18 - Dutch Service will be held in the **Ancaster** Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. John Klomps will be preaching.

lar 30 Woodstock Dutch Theatre Groep - "Ik Voel Nattingheid" Christian Heritage School, **Jordan Station**, Ont. See ad Feb 5 issue for details or call 519-283-6285.

Apr 7 The Liberation Choir Fundraising Dinner will take place at 5.30 – 7 pm in Studio Theatre/Convention Centre at Hamilton Place with Micheal Coren as guest speaker. Included in this ticket price of $ 200 is: prime seating at the concert and a Dinner Reservation. A $ 100 tax receipt will be issued by Worldwide Christian Schools. Tickets available at Pianohouse Burlington, Worldwide Christian Schools, or Tjitske @ 905 520 0207

Apr 7 The Liberation Choir Burlington/Brampton Chapters perform in the EASTER CONCERT with Guelph Symphony Orchestra (Simon Irving, conductor) and a Combined Children's Choir (Elizabeth Webster, conductor) and Jennifer McMahon, soprano soloist. Director: Willem Van Suijdam@ 7.30 pm, GREAT HALL, HAMILTON PLACE, HAMILTON ON.Ticket prices: $40 $33 $25. Tickets available at: Hamilton Place Box office, Ticket master, Choir members, River Run Centre in Guelph, Selected Dutch Stores and at the Pianohouse Burlington, 5205 Harvester Road, Burlington. www.liberationchoir.com

May 26 Laurentian Hills Christian School 40th anniversary, 11 Laurentian Dr, **Kitchener,** ON Dinner, program, $15/person. To reserve by May 1st., call Mrs Grift 519-576-6700 or Mrs. Olthoff 519-742-5152. Check the web site for more details at www.lhcs.ws

June 9, 10 The First Christian Reformed Church of Kemptville invites former members and friends to join them in celebrating 50 years of God's faithfulness. Planned activities include a banquet on June 9, 2007 and worship service on June 10, 2007. For more information, please contact Harmen Boersma (613-258-5565).

LAURENTIAN HILLS CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

Celebrating God's Blessings
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of
Laurentian Hills Christian School
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Kitchener, ON
N2E 1C1
on
Saturday, May 26, 2007
with
Refreshments at 6:00 pm
Dinner/Program at 7:00 pm
$15.00/Person

Seating is limited. Call Mrs. M-J Grift at the school office at 519-576-6700 or Mrs. D. Olthoff at 519-742-5352 to May 1st to reserve a spot.
Check the web site for more details at www.lhcs.ws

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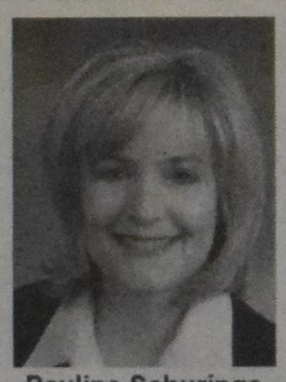
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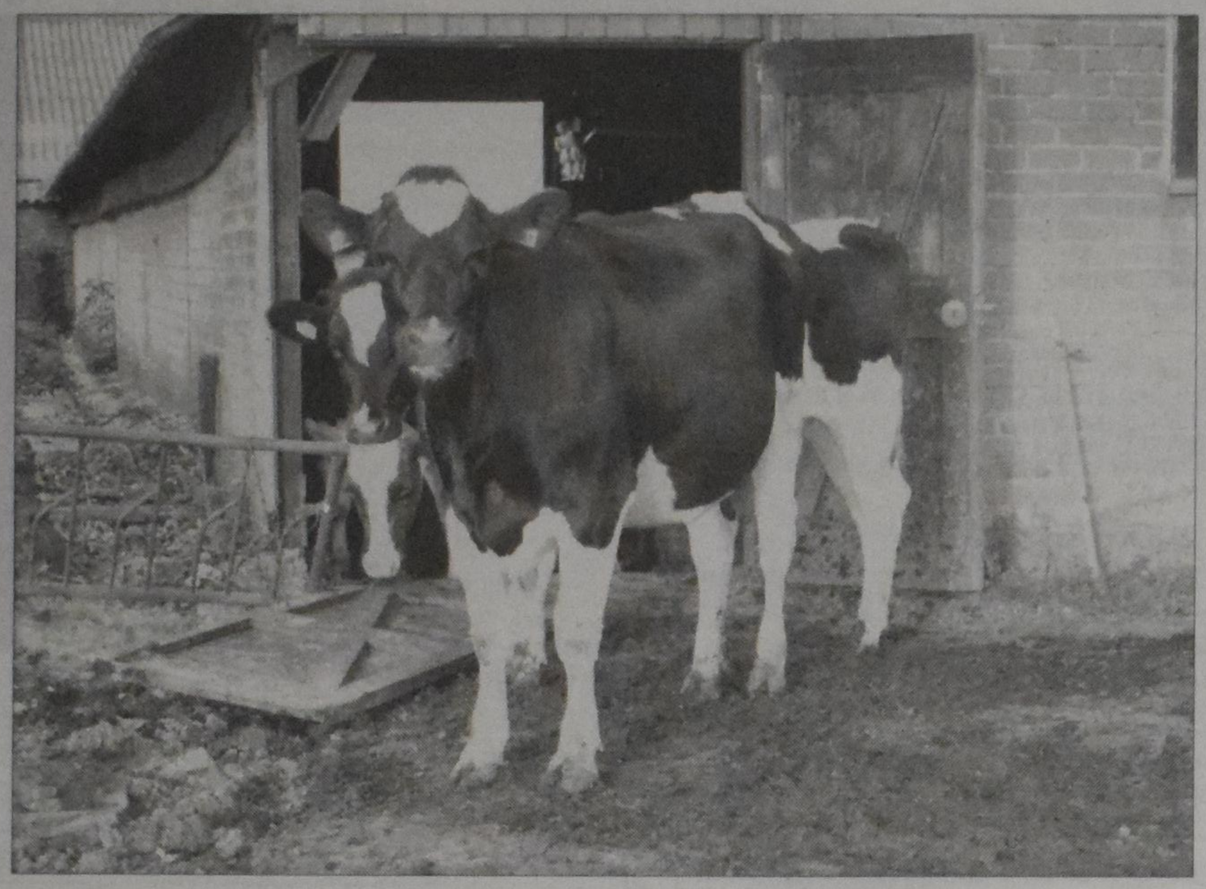
News

Global warming: it's not the cars but the cows

Meat eaters are responsible for 1.5 more tons of carbon dioxide per person than vegetarians every year.



Brad Knickerbocker

As governments begin to tackle the causes and cures of global warming, the action focuses on gas-guzzling vehicles and coal-fired power plants, not on lowly bovines.

Yet livestock are a major emitter of greenhouse gases that cause climate change. And as meat becomes a growing mainstay of human diet around the world, changing what we eat may prove as hard as changing what we drive.

It's not just the well-known and frequently joked-about flatulence and manure of grass-chewing cattle that's the problem, according to a recent report by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Land-use changes, especially deforestation to expand pastures and to create arable land for feed crops, is a big part. So is the use of energy to produce fertilizers, to run the slaughterhouses and meat-processing plants, and to pump water.

"Livestock are one of the most significant contributors to today's most serious environmental problems," Henning Steinfeld, senior author of the report, said when the FAO findings were released in November.

Livestock are responsible for 18 percent of greenhouse-gas emissions as measured in carbon dioxide equivalent, reports the FAO. This includes 9 percent of all CO2 emissions, 37 percent of methane, and 65 percent of nitrous oxide. Altogether, that's more than the emissions caused by transportation.

The latter two gases are particularly troubling – even though they represent far smaller concentrations in atmosphere than CO2, which remains the main global warming culprit. But methane has 23 times the global warming potential (GWP) of CO2 and nitrous oxide has 296 times the warming potential of carbon dioxide.

Methane could become a greater problem if the permafrost in northern latitudes thaws with increasing temperatures, releasing the gas now trapped below decaying vegetation. What's more certain is that emissions of these gases can spike as humans consume more livestock products.

As prosperity increased around the world in recent decades, the number of people eating meat (and the amount one eats every year) has risen steadily. Between 1970 and 2002, annual per capita meat consumption in developing countries rose from 11 kilograms (24 lbs.) To 29 kilograms (64 lbs.), according to the FAO. (In developed countries, the comparable figures were 65 kilos and 80 kilos.) As population increased, total meat consumption in the developing world grew nearly five-fold over that period.

Beyond that, annual global meat production is projected to more than double from 229 million tons at the beginning of the decade to 465 million tons in 2050. This makes livestock the fastest growing sector of global agriculture.

Animal-rights activists and those advocating vegetarianism have been quick to pick up on the implications of the FAO report.

"Arguably the best way to reduce global warming in our lifetimes is to reduce or eliminate our consumption of animal products," writes Noam Mohr in a report for EarthSave International.

Changing one's diet can lower greenhouse gas emissions quicker than shifts away from fossil fuel burning technologies, Mr. Mohr writes, because the turnover rate for farm animals is shorter than that for cars and power plants.

"Even if cheap, zero-emission fuel sources were available today, they would take many years to build and slowly replace the massive infrastructure our economy depends upon today," he writes. "Similarly, unlike carbon dioxide which can remain in the air for more than a century, methane cycles out of the atmosphere in just eight years, so that lower methane emissions quickly translate to cooling of the earth."

Researchers at the University of Chicago compared the global warming impact of meat eaters with that of vegetarians and found that the average American diet – including all food processing steps – results in the annual production of an extra 1.5 tons of CO2-equivalent (in the form of all greenhouse gases) compared to a no-meat diet. Researchers Gidon Eshel and Pamela Martin concluded that dietary changes could make more difference than trading in a standard sedan for a more efficient hybrid car, which reduces annual CO2 emissions by roughly one ton a year.

"It doesn't have to be all the way to the extreme end of vegan," says Dr. Eshel, whose family raised beef cattle in Israel. "If you simply cut down from two burgers a week to one, you've already made a substantial difference."

• CSM Staff writer Peter Spotts contributed to this report.

News Digest

Pity the parents . . . pity the children

Kids nowadays are being raised under optimum conditions. In the future they can blame their bad behavior and neuroses either on parental permissiveness or on strictness. Nearly every major popular magazine has recently carried long articles excoriating parents for lack of discipline and for lavishing too much praise on their kids. We've already learned that kids have been overprotected against filth and germs and as a result have weaker resistance. Now we're hearing that parents have for too long been afraid to say No to their kids and as a result we have a generation of kids with no built-in self-discipline.

At the same time, the forces arrayed against parental authority are still powerful. California is considering a no-spank law. In Canada all sorts of traditional parenting has at one time or another been condemned as abusive, whether physical or psychological. Since it is said that "all behavior is learned," if your kid smacks somebody, the parents are under suspicion.

So, whether they've been raised with honey or with the wooden spoon, today's kids will have good grounds for filing lawsuits against their parents in the future for incompetence.

So our children are in the middle of a tug of war between child-rearing experts in opposing camps. Pity the parents. Pity the children. Fortunately, most parents pay less attention to the experts than to common sense. Of course, under the assault of contradictory messages from the experts, pop psych and the media, common sense has itself become a bit schizophrenic.

The Dutch are smiling

After the U.N. issued its report comparing the well-being of children in 21 of the world's richest countries, the Dutch are smiling while Canadians, Britons and Americans are snarling. The Netherlands and Sweden top the U.N. list. *The Economist* notes: "Rates of infant mortality, child deaths caused by accidents or other scores of health and safety, for example, show that children in all these rich countries in fact enjoy an historically unparalleled quality of life."

What criteria did the U.N. use to rank these countries? The list seems to be almost an inverted form of the one put out by the Fraser Institute ranking countries according to economic freedom (or "free enterprise"). The more socialist the country, the higher it appears on the U.N. list. So is the U.N. simply saying that socialism is good for kids?

The report drew on 40 different indicators of child welfare, but it dismisses contentions by social conservatives that stable, employed two-parent families are the main contributors to child welfare. What really matters is how much the state dishes up.

The report does, however, pay attention to such things as family meals, time spent together as a family, teen drug use and pregnancy and satisfaction with schools. Would bigger welfare payouts in Britain and the U.S. prompt parents to stay together and eat together?

Canada ranked low in young people's subjective sense of well-being (15th), behaviours and risks (17th) and peer and family relationships (18th). So Canadians haven't been coddling their children overly much, and if one's sense of well-being is related to self-esteem (as seems probable), maybe we aren't as guilty of "killing our kids with caution" as a recent issue of Maclean's suggests.

Measuring "quality of life"

Economists, especially those working for government agencies, are growing increasingly dissatisfied with using such measures as gross domestic product and average income to gauge well-being. They want to measure "quality of life," which includes psychological factors like stress levels and happiness. Once they've figured how to measure it, can government programs and ministries be far behind? What good is a government that cannot make us happy?